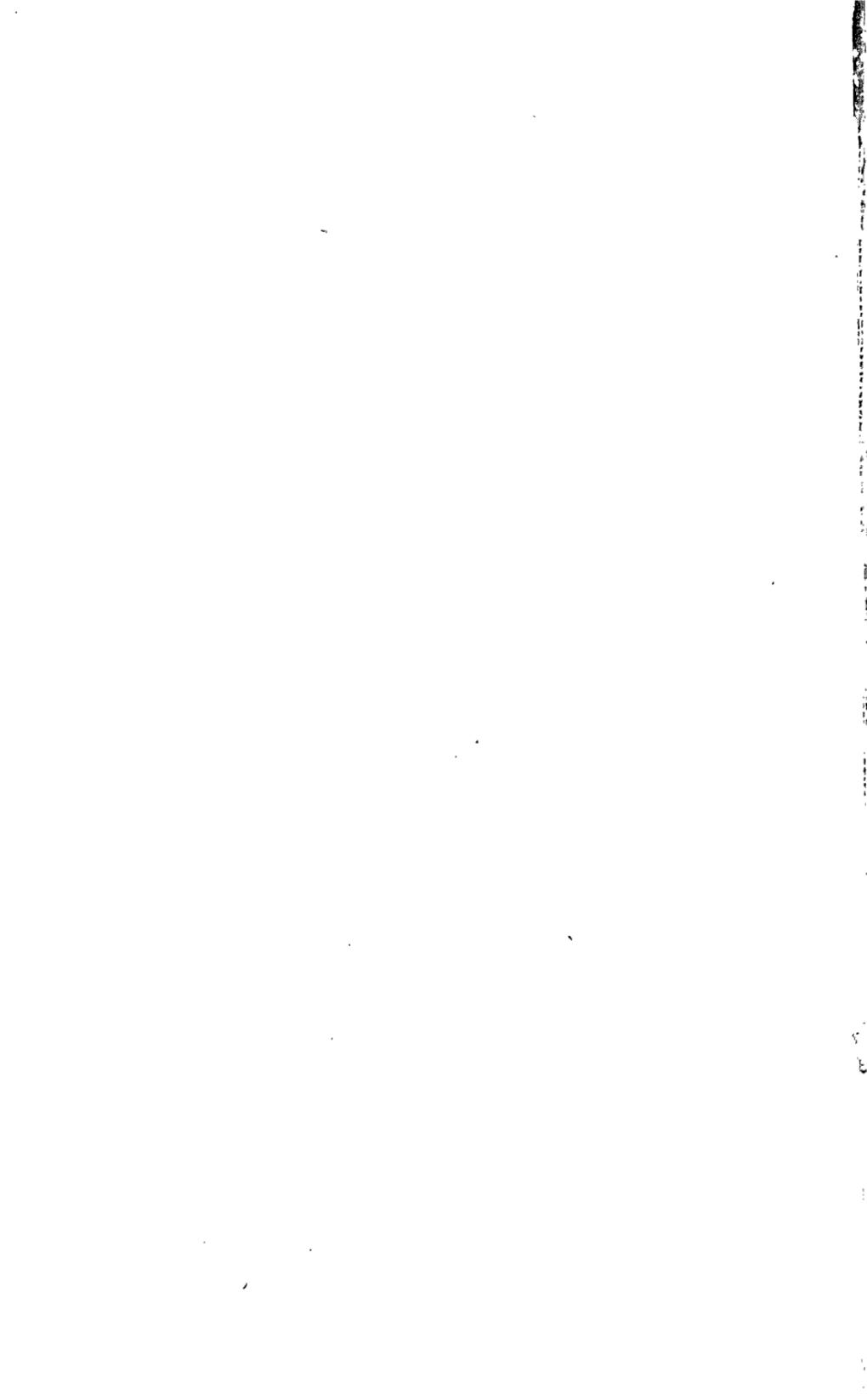


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GREAT MASTERS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

By The Same Author

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SUSHEELA MISRA

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Dedicated to
the cherished memory of my husband,
Dr. SHIVA SHARAN MISRA

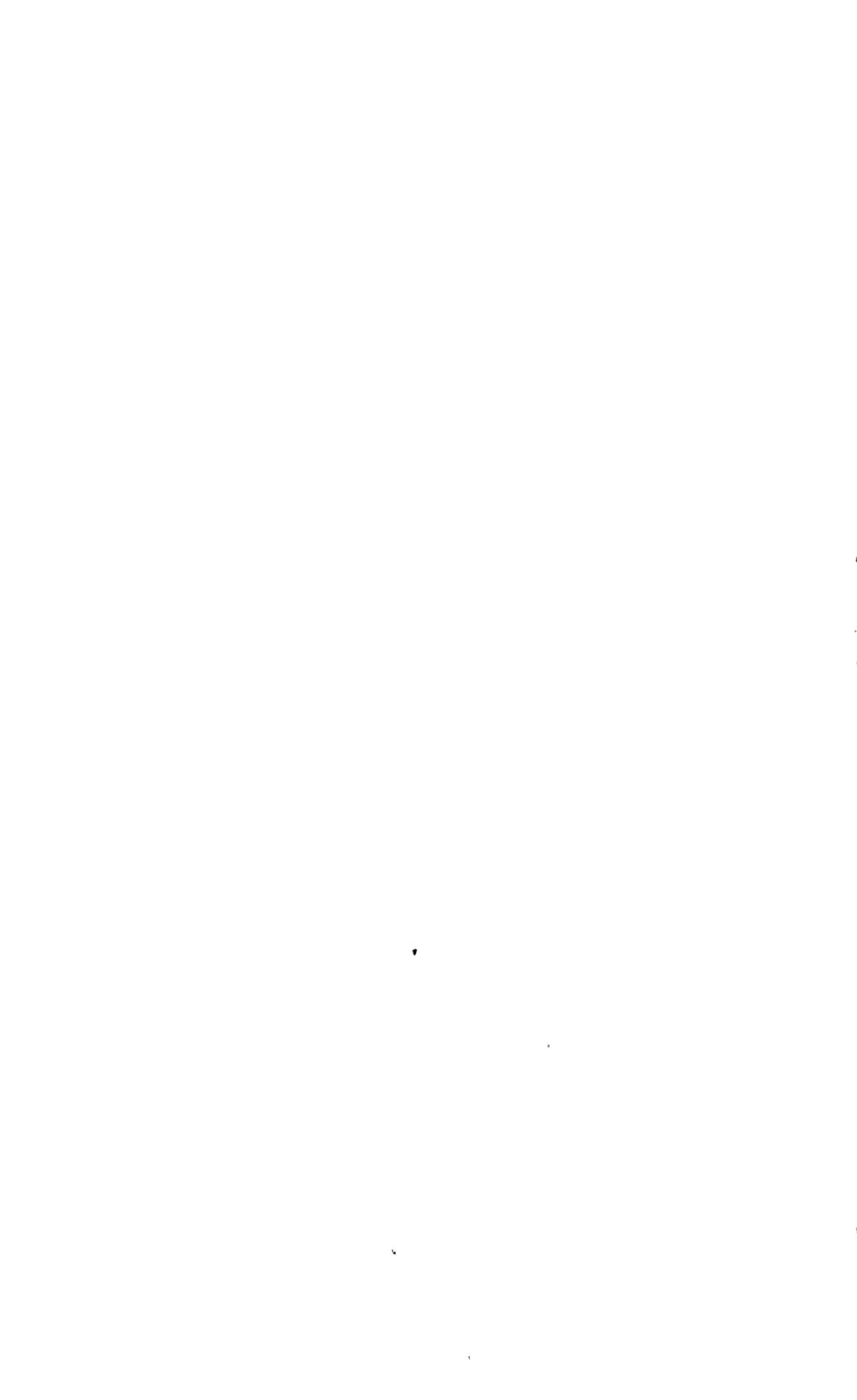
FOREWORD

There are some great names in Hindustani Music which are only legends to us now. There are other great masters whom we had the good fortune to hear and know personally, but who will become legends for posterity. So far as I know there is no book in English which can give us glimpses of the life and art of these great masters.

Smt. Susheela Misra has rendered a great service to Indian music by providing pen-portraits of twenty-six great masters. Of these, Hazrat Amir Khusrau belongs to the thirteenth century; Swami Haridas and Tansen belong to the sixteenth century, and the rest belong to the 19th and 20th centuries. All these artistes occupy a very important position in Indian music. It would be unfortunate if people did not know something about them.

Smt. Susheela Misra is not a mere dilettante. She received practical training in music for several years from no less teachers than Pdt. Govind Narayan Natu and Principal S.N. Ratanjankar, and took the Sangeet Vishard Degree. She has been a Music Producer in All India Radio for nearly 28 years and is a Fellow of the U.P. Sangeet Natak Akademi. She came in personal contact with many of these musicians of the twentieth century whose life and art she has so vividly portrayed. She is a gifted writer and commands an exquisite style. I am sure this book will appeal to every one, whether he is a mere tyro in, or a connoisseur of the art of music.

(*Padma Bhushan*) JAIDEVA SINGH
Formerly, Chief Producer, Hindustani Music,
All India Radio,
and
President, U.P. Sangeet Natak Akademi.



PREFACE

Since India won her independence, there has been a wide spread and enthusiastic revival of interest in our fine arts, especially in the ancient arts of music and dance. Now there are more music festivals, concerts and soirees all over the country than ever before. Besides AIR, various Sangeet Natak Akademies, music organisations and music colleges are trying their best to preserve traditions and foster the development of our music. It is a happy augury that many Indian universities have started departments of music for imparting musical education at the highest level. In spite of all these encouraging factors and mounting enthusiasm, what is woefully lacking in a vast majority of our educated intelligentsia is a knowledge of even the fundamentals of the history and background of our music and musicians. We have very scanty reliable records regarding the biographies of our great artistes.

Owing to the unprecedented awakening of interest in Indian music and dance among art-lovers and connoisseurs in other continents, there is a constant flow of our musicians and dancers into these foreign lands where there are vast numbers of music lovers who are genuinely eager to learn more about our art and artistes. Unfortunately, they too are handicapped by the scarcity of books on Indian music which can give them authentic information about the numerous brilliant maestros who have preserved and moulded our traditional Hindustani music with their individual contributions. As a student of music, I have always felt frustrated by the paucity of books giving adequate information about our artistes who have upheld the ancient traditions of music, enriched them, and passed them on to us from century to century. In order to gather some information about even a single musician, one has to hunt for bits from various scattered sources and piece

them together. This lack of documented information is a serious handicap for students as well as lovers of music. Even in the case of a musical genius like Sangeet Samrat Tansen, one is baffled by the conflicting views regarding even the dates of his birth and death ! Some musicologists consider that Tansen's life-span was from 1506 to 1589, while others argue with equal conviction that it was from 1532 to 1595. I feel that at least we of this advanced age should collect and publish as much authentic information as we can, about the musical giants of the past and of our contemporaries. In writing these penportraits, I have confined myself to those great artistes who are no longer in our midst. The artistes from chapters 8 to 26 have all been our contemporaries. I consider myself extremely fortunate because I came into close contact with most of them. Besides attending numerous public concerts and private soirees of theirs, I got many opportunities to interview some of them, to discuss music with many, and to hear about their rich musical experiences.

Some chapters have very interesting backgrounds, like for instance, the chapter on Sufi Inyat Khan. More than two decades ago when my first book was published, I had the thrilling experience of receiving a letter from a genuine music-lover from Holland. After going through my book in some library in the Hague, she wrote to me requesting me to send her all the information I could gather about her spiritual and musical Guru Sufi Inayat Khan. I felt ashamed to confess that I had never heard of him nor his music. After undertaking considerable research, I have included a chapter on this great musician.

This book is only a modest attempt to familiarise the large number of intelligent Hindustani music enthusiasts here and abroad with some of the luminaries who have enriched music through their dedication and contributions. Everyone of us should know something about the glorious cultural and artistic heritage of which we are the heirs. Each great artiste is "the bridge between the finite and the Infinite", for, music is the key to divine wisdom.

This book is lovingly dedicated to the cherished memory of my husband Dr. Shiva Sharan Misra, M.D. (Honours);

F.R.C.P. (London); F.A.M.S. His deep love for Hindustani classical music and his loving encouragement have been great sources of inspiration for me. I also bow my head before the enduring memory of my father and mother who inculcated in me a deep love for literature and music right from my childhood.

I offer my respects and deep gratefulness to the well-known musicologist and music connoisseur, Padma Bhushan Thakur Jaideva Singh in whose blessings and encouragement I have always basked. In spite of his being extremely busy with his own books, he readily and gladly agreed to write this Foreword which certainly enhances the value of this humble effort of mine !

It is my pleasure to offer my thanks to my good friend and erstwhile colleague, Mr. G.C. Awasthy who encouraged me by his enthusiasm in publishing this book.

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SUSHEELA MISRA

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Chapter I



Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Poet, musician, composer, scholar, historian, writer, statesman courtier—a warm hearted humanist, a sufi mystic and an ardent lover of Indian music, Hazrat Amir Khusrau stands out as one of the most versatile and outstanding names in the history of Hindustani music. Although separated from us by more than 7 centuries, his lasting contributions to the arts of music and poetry, to the domains of mysticism, philosophy, historiography and scholarship keep his memory fresh and somehow bring him closer to us. A polished and accomplished courtier who served a number of successive rulers from Balban (1266/86), Malik Chajju, Prince Bughra Khan, Prince Mohamad, Hatim Khan, Kaiqubad, Jalaluddin Khilji, Alaud-din Khilji, to Ghyasuddin Tughlaq (1320 to 26) his is the story of a poet "who had many a patron to please with traditional panegyrics." Living in those troubled times in the midst of constant political intrigues and treacherous assassinations, Khusrau had to shift his loyalties tactfully from patron to patron, and "tread warily" for survival. Amir Khusrau's multifaceted genius was rendered even more colourful because of the fact that he combined in himself the *samskara* of an Indian along with a Turkish background. His mother was the daughter of a Hindu nobleman who had embraced Islam later. Abul Hasan Yaminuddin Khusrau (1253-1325 AD) more familiar to us by the name of Amir Khusrau, was partly of Turkish

origin as his father, Amir Saifuddin Mohammad, a chief of the Lachin tribe of Turkey, was a native of the green-domed city of Kash (Shahr-e-sabz now) in Turkistan. Driven by the Mongol hoardes of Changez Khan, he had fled from his native land, and found asylum in India in the 13th century. From his Turkish father, Khusrau imbibed Islam and Sufism, and he had become well versed in the Turkish, Persian and Arabic languages. Since he was born in Mominpur (Patiali) in the Etah district of Uttar Pradesh (in 1253 AD), Braj Bhasha was his mother tongue. Later on, when he had to stay in Avadh, Delhi and Punjab, he mastered also Khadi Boli, Hindi and Urdu. To quote Dr. Zoe Ansari: "Emerging, as it were, from the confluence of 5 languages, he composed poetry in Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Braj Bhasha, and Khadi Boli running into almost 5 lakh verses."

When he lost his father at the tender age of eight, his doting and kind maternal grandfather brought him to Delhi, lavished care on him, and lovingly provided the boy with the best of education and a congenial atmosphere for the cultivation of his many talents. Later on, Khusrau became a most ardent devotee of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya (Chisti), the great Sufi mystic and saint, who was a passionate lover of devotional music. A true Sufi, he held music in the greatest esteem as the means for God-realisation.

"Variety was the essence of his life"—writes Jafar Abbas—"He mixed with kings and commoners, Sufis and soldiers, poets, scholars and musicians, drank deeply of life, and gave of his best in fascinating abundance. Rich indeed was the harvest of his experience, but richer still was what he gave to the world. His Persian Ghazals are sung not only in Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad, but also in Lahore, Tehran and Tashkent."

Selections from his 5 Persian Divans compiled by himself have appeared in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Soviet Union and of course, in India. In the words of Dr. Zoe Ansari, "Amir Khusrau was a phenomenon that just came off 7 centuries ago—one whose name is still cherished with respect by European Orientalists, Persians, Iranians, and also in USSR and Afghanistan. The great Persian lyricist Hafiz of Shirazulla transcribed thousands of Khusrau's lines, described him as

Tooti-e-Hind—the singing bird of India.” So great was his love and admiration for his motherland that Khusrau proudly called himself *Turk-e-Hindustani*.

Many and varied are his bequests to posterity. The musical instruments attributed to him, the styles and types of songs, the ragas and talas he created have enriched Hindustani music for ever, so that the impact of his versatile genius is felt even today. Such was his creative genius that he seems to have enriched whatever he invented or touched, such as Kawwali, Qasida, Qalbana, Naqsh, Qaul, Rang Tarang, Do Sukhne (versified puzzles), Gul, Nigar, Kahmukrani, Sohila, 5 romantic and 5 historical masnavis (long narratives), Dohe, Sawan and so on. That one person could have innovated, written, and composed so much, sounds almost incredible. Such was the vast sweep of this multifaceted genius. His beautiful Ghazals containing alternately Persian and Braj bhasha lines prove his great desire for the synthesis of the Indo-Persian elements in music. By infusing the romantic element into Persian Ghazals, he enhanced their universal appeal.

Well-versed in the subtleties of Persian as well as Indian poetry and music, Khusrau was well-equipped to introduce many far-reaching innovations in the field of our music which he enriched as few others have done. He stands out as one who gave a big impetus to the synthesis of Indo-Muslim cultures, and the cross-breeding of Indian modes with Persian Moqquams. A born poet, his poetic outpourings began to flow out from the age of nine. In his *History of Persian Literature*, Edward Browne writes: “Amir Khusrau was enormously productive. Daulat credits him with nearly half a million verses”. He states how one Mirza Baysunqui, after ceaseless efforts, collected more than a lakh of Khusrau’s verses, but gave up in despair, as he found it quite impossible to make a complete collection. An accomplished musician with a most creative temperament, Khusrau is credited with a large number of inventions and innovations in Hindustani music. Many ragas, talas, musical instruments, and several musical types are all considered to be the products of his fertile genius.

Amir Khusrau prided in being an Indian and expressed his unbounded admiration for Indian music in his famous

words: "Indian music, the fire that burns the heart and soul, is superior to the music of any other country. Foreigners even after staying in India for 30 to 40 years, cannot play a single Indian tune correctly". (Mir Mirza in *Life & Works of Amir Khusro*). He felt that "the music of Hindustan is not of this earth, it is heavenly".

That Amir Khusrau had made a deep study of both Indian music and Persian "mausiqui" is obvious from the various contributions he made to Hindustani music by an artistic synthesis of both. He made a bold change by replacing the old murchhanas by the 22 Persian moqquams which were "groups of 12 notes necessary for rendering proposed ragas." This grouping known as the Mela Kartas in Karnatic music, was adopted into the Hindustani system, and called the Thats.

The Qawwali is a great contribution of Amir Khusrau. Qawwali is really Muslim devotional music in the pattern of Hindu Bhajans. It uses Persianised language and is set to qawwali taal from which this style derives its name. While the main devotional refrain and theme are emphasized by well punctuated choruses, the leading singer sings in a delightfully ornate style characterised by fast *tans* and difficult *swara* combinations.

The disciples of Khusrau who specialised in Qawwali singing later came to be classified into Qawwalls and Kalawants. The former sang only Muslim devotional songs, while the latter took to singing mundane songs in the Qawwali style. The new school of Indian music formed by the mixture of Indo-Iranian melodies was known as the tradition of the Qawwal Bachche.

Much much later, Haddu, Hassu and Nathan Khans (3 famous brothers who were the disciples of Bade Mohammad Khan of Gwailior) evolved a new ornate style of fast Khayals by a skilful blending of the Kalawant and Qawwali styles. We may say that the seeds of the khayal style sown by Amir Khusrau were matured by Sultan Hussain Sharqui of Jaunpur, and the style was taken to unprecedented heights of popularity by Adarang and Sadarang under the regime of Mohammad Shah Rangile; it was further embellished by Haddu, Hassu and Nathan Khans. Many musicologists tend to deny any credit to Khusrau in the matter of the Khayal. But the very name with its Persian flavour and the use of Braj Bhasha, Urdu, etc., makes

it a product of Indo-Persian synthesis in which Khusrau's role has been a most outstanding one.

By crossing some Indian modes with Persian Moqquams, he created a large number of delightful new ragas such as Yaman (Persian Al Yaman blended with the Indian Kalyan) Kafi, Bahar, Zeelaph, Sanzgiri, Sarparda, Ushaq and Muhaiyir.

Tarana and Trivat were also Khusrau's contributions. There is a much-repeated, though not very convincing, story which is often quoted in order to prove Khusrau's brilliance as a performing musician. Thousands of musicians had been brought by Malik Kafur into the splendid court of Sultan Alauddin Khilji from the conquered territories in the Deccan, Deogiri, Vijayanagar, etc. Among them was Gopal Naik, one of the most respected and renowned musicians of the time. His fame had preceded him into the imperial court. The story goes that by hiding under the dais, Khusrau listened to Gopal Naik's masterly exposition of his unique Rag Kadambak for 6 days and that on the seventh day, he was able to reproduce all that his rival had sung. But instead of Sahitya, he used meaningless words (Mridang bols) and thus created the Tarana form. At Gopal Naik's magnanimous request, this new style or type of song was popularised. Amir Khusrau's pupils were trained in singing Tarana, Qawwalis, Kalbana, Ghazals, etc. The Qawwal—Bachon Ka Gharana spread to Meerut, Agra, Baroda, Alwar, Lucknow, Lahore, Varanasi, Indore, Jaipur, Kooch—Behar and Jaunpur.

Many of Amir Khusrau's compositions are full of Sufi thoughts and colour. As a poet, few have been as prolific as Khusrau. Being a devoted follower of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, it is only natural that a large number of his compositions are full of Sufi mysticism. Sufism has much in common with Hindu *Vedanta* and *Bhakti*. As such, both Sufism and the Bhakti-movement did a lot to mitigate the religious antagonism between Hindus and Muslims in those troubled times of history. A deep allegorical and philosophical meaning runs through many of his devotional compositions. Here is an instance; it is set in Rag Jaunpuri and Deepchandi Tal :

*"Bahut rahi babul ghar dulhan,
Chal tere pee ne bulaayi,*

*Bahut khel kheli sakhiyan se,
 Ant kari larkaayi,
 Nahaay dhoy ke bastar pahire,
 Sabhi singar banaayi,
 Bida karne ko kutumb sab aye,
 Sigre log lugayi,
 Khusrau chali sasurari sajni,
 Sang nahi koyi jaayi.*

Although outwardly this describes a young bride getting ready to leave for her husband's home, there is a poignant underlying meaning signifying the final journey of each human being into the unknown.

The atmosphere of the courts in which Khusrau spent most of his life serving ruler after ruler was not always congenial for poetic or musical creativity. His poetic genius blossomed forth under the reign of the aged and kind King Jalaluddin. Khusrau was 38 years old at that time. A contemporary historian, Ziauddin Barni has recorded : "When the beautiful damsels danced and sang, and the ghazals of Amir Khusrau were recited in that assembly which could scarcely be considered of this earth, the lifeless ones got a fresh life, and sad hearts gladdened". (This quotation is from *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau* by Dr. Wahid Mirza.)

Another great innovation of Khusrau is the Sitar. India abounded in a large variety of Veenas out of which he chose the 3 stringed Tritantri Veena and rechristened it as Sehtaar (the Persian word for 3 stringed). In course of time, Sehtaar became Sitar. Of course, the Sitar that we know today has reached its high state of evolution after centuries of improvements at the hands of many brilliant artistes. Sitar, in the words of one musicologist, is "the Persian *Ud* in shape, and Indian Veena in principle." This instrument is thus an epitome of Khusrau's successful Indo-Iranian musical synthesis.

Hakim Mohammad Ikram states in his book, *Madynul Mausiqui* that after Amir Khusrau, the next most important person who developed and propagated the qawwal *padhati* was Sultan Hussain Sharqui of Jaunpur. He has given a long list of Khusrau's Persian works. He also mentions 17 taals propounded by Khusrau such as Pashto, Sawaari, Jhoomra, Jalad

Tritala, Zobahar, Qawwali, Adachautal, Farodast, etc. Some people even ascribe the Dholak to him. Going through his life-story of 72 eventful years is like going through chapters of North Indian history at a time when political power shifted rapidly from person to person. Although most of these monarchs were mutually antagonistic, and in several cases, they got the throne through assassination of predecessors, strangely all of them were great admirers and generous patrons of Hazrat Amir Khusrau. Khusrau's genius rose above the mundane political turmoils perhaps because he spent a great deal of time and was more at home in the soothing and ennobling atmosphere of the Khanqah—an institution which encouraged the unassuming and ascetic life-style of the Sufi mystics with their broad human sympathies. Many a time Khusrau must have had to face a conflict between his courtly patron and his spiritual master—Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. But it is said that "at no time did he forsake the spiritual for the temporal advantage. Gay, human, and never a recluse, he remained the incorruptible witness of history. He always distinguished the eternal values of life from the purely ephemeral ones."

Khusrau described his beloved spiritual mentor in the following words :

"He is an emperor without a throne, and without a crown, but emperors stand in need of the dust of his feet."

Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya loved his favourite disciple so much that he often said of Khusrau :

"I get tired of everybody, even of myself, but I never get tired of thee." He even remarked that he would not like to enter paradise without his favourite "*Turkulla*." It was an irony of fate that the Sheikh died when Amir Khusrau had to be away with his then patron Ghiyasuddin in Lakhnauti. One of the famous and touchingly simple couplets (dohas) that welled out of his grief-stricken heart as he got news of his master's death in 1325 ran thus :

*Gori soway sez par,
Mukh par dare kesh,
Chal Khusrau ghar apne,
Rain bhayi sab desh.*"

(The fair one lies on the couch with her black tresses scattered over her face. O Khusrau, come home now, night has fallen all over the world).

As foretold by Khusrau himself, he did not survive his spiritual master for long. It is also said that he abandoned worldly ambitions and lived in religious retirement. Anyway, within a few months, Khusrau followed his beloved "Auliya", and was laid to rest at the foot of the master's grave. So deep and everlasting was the bond between these two that we cannot think of one without thinking of the other. Both lived far above the atmosphere of turmoil and intolerance of that era, and both stand out for their humanity and spirituality. "While Nizamuddin Auliya brought to bear on Khusrau's thought and impressions a philosophical profundity, Hazrat Amir Khusrau brought to bear on his thought the graces of devotional poetry and music. Both were mystics of a high order, the one rising to saintliness, the other following him."

Thus ended the colourful life of an amazing genius who had witnessed the rise and fall of many great dynasties, who, although living in "a court full of utter depravity, moral perversion, political chaos, treacherous intrigues, and gruesome political murders," continued his scholarly pursuits and poetic outpourings, enriched Hindustani music and shone as a devoted disciple of his spiritual master, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.

The mighty kings in whose courts this poet-laureate served, have gone into oblivion. But the tombs of the great Sufi saint and his devoted disciple in Delhi attract people of all castes and creeds year in and year out, for, the former's "messages of universal love and tolerance, unity and catholicity, humanity and brotherhood" are of eternal value. Fresh flowers are still placed and a lamp lit beside the graves where the great Auliya and his "Turkulla" sleep in peace for ever.

Chapter II

Sangeet Samrat Tansen

Of all the luminaries in Hindustani music, it is Tansen's name that has become a synonym for musical genius and perfection. And yet, the dates of his birth and death continue to be controversial ! Some musicologists consider Tansen's life span to have been from 1506 to 1589 while others equally vehemently assert it to have been from 1532 to 1595. More than four centuries have rolled by since the "Sangeet Samrat" passed into eternal "Naada Brahma" but the numerous legends about him are still narrated and listened to with great fascination as though they were recent happenings. The ragas and compositions created by him are still being rendered by some of the greatest musicians of our times, and Tansen's name continues to outshine all others in the firmament of Hindustani music just as Abul Fazl had predicted :

"A musician like Tansen has not been, and will not be, born for a thousand years." Tansen represents in himself a splendid fusion of the best in Hindu and Muslim cultures, and it was he "who perfected the Indo-Muslim synthetic classical style known as *darbari* or court-music."

Although there are no authentic biographies of Tansen, a large number of fanciful legends about his life and music have been handed down from generation to generation. One feels that though they may not all be true, there may be some truth in some of them. The popular belief is that the two gurus who

moulded his philosophy and musical genius were the Sufi mystic, Mohammad Ghaus of Gwalior, and the great saint-singer, Swami Haridas of Brindaban. There are, however, many musicologists who categorically state that Hazrat Mohammad Ghaus could never have been Tansen's spiritual guru, and that there are records (like *The 284 Vaishnavas*) to prove that Tansen's religious guru was Govind Swami, while his music gurus were Swami Haridas and Baba Haridas Dagur.

Early in the 16th century, there lived a Gaud Brahmin poet, Makarand Pande (or (Mukundram ?) and his wife in Behat, a village seven miles away from Gwalior. After years of prayers, a son was born to them and he was given many pet names such as Tanna, Ramtanu, and Trilochan. Till the age of five, the child was dumb. It is believed that the father's devoted worship of Lord Shiva in the temple earned for him the blessing that he sought. On a dark night of pouring rain, Makarand had a vision of the deity, and the five-year old son suddenly gave a scream and uttered the following words of prayer : "Pyare Tuhi Brahma ; Tuhi Vishnu ! Tuhi Mahesh !."

Another common belief is that Tanna was converted to Islam either when "Peer Mohammad Ghaus blessed him by sharing his betel-roll", or when he married Brahmani Hussain (Premkumari) a gifted singer in the court of Rani Mriganayani of Gwalior, or when the Emperor Akbar gave his daughter Meherunnissa in marriage to him. Sri Prabhulal Garg ("Sangeet," Hathras) has written a convincing article to prove that Tansen remained a Hindu all his life. One proof is that Mulla Badayuni, a historian of Akbar's court has mentioned his name as "Tansing." Titles like "Miyan", "Mirza". and "Khan" used to be bestowed on outstanding Hindu as well as Muslim artistes as a mark of respect, e.g., Miyan Pratap Singh, Mirza Raja Singh and so on. Anyway, the name by which he will always be remembered and cherished is Miyan Tansen, a name appreciatively conferred upon him by Maharaja Ramniranjan of Gwalior. Ragas beginning with the name "Miyan", such as, Miyan-Ki-Todi, Miyan-Ki-Malhar, Miyan-Ki-Sarang, and the majestic Darbari Kanada are all Tansen's creations. Tansen's Malhar inspired many other varieties of Malhars such

as Gaud Malhar, Surdasi-Malhar, Mirabai ki Malhar, Charjuki Malhar etc. Most of his compositions bear the "signature" *Taanasen*.

Even as a child, Tanna showed remarkable talent as a ventriloquist, in which Swami Haridas shrewdly detected his musical potentialities. A great scholar, saint, musician, and composer, Swami Haridas stayed in holy Brindaban immersed in his worship of Krishna-Radha through his divine music, and imparting musical training to a large number of gifted disciples. A master of all the chief Dhrupad styles, (*muits*), he is said to have perfected Tansen in the Gaudbaani (a style in which the pervading rasas are reposefulness, sweetness, and devotion), while he perfected Raja Samokhan Singh, ruler of Simhalgarh, in the Kandhari Bani (a forceful style reflecting heroism, valour, and strength). Tanna's early musical training was in the school of music founded in Gwalior by Raja Man Singh Tomar (1480-1518). Later on, after his perfect training under the great and magnanimous guru Swami Haridas, Tanna came to be known as Tansen and became a rare combination of a superb practical musician and an excellent Vagyeyakar. He was appointed a court-musician first in the darbar of Maharaja Ram Niranjan Singh of Gwalior, and then in that of Raja Ram Singh, the cultured ruler of Rewa. Before long, Tansen's fame spread far and wide. Emperor Akbar sent one Jalaluddin Khurji to fetch Tansen into the imperial court. The attachment between the Raja and his court-musician was very deep, but the imperial orders could not be disobeyed. Tansen soon became the favourite of the emperor and was made one of the Nine Gems in his court, the others being Raja Birbal, Raja Mansingh, Abul Fazl, Raja Todarmal, Faizi, Hakim Imam, Mulla Dopyaza and Abdul Rahim Khan Khankhana. Although there were 36 reputed musicians in the court, Tansen won the Emperor's admiration so completely that a time came when the royal patron wished to hear only Tansen's music. This caused a lot of jealousy among his rivals, like Adam Khan Jeen Khan, Brijnath and others who vied with one another in hatching plots to get rid of the emperor's favourite. But Tansen had complete command over ragas through which he could work many miracles such as taming a maddened wild

elephant, bringing nightfall at noon, causing flowers and buds to burst into spring-bloom and so on. With the hope of destroying Tansen, his rivals persuaded the Emperor to request Tansen to sing raga Deepak which he had never rendered in the court. Tansen explained to Akbar how Deepak would not only ignite lamps, but also consume and destroy the singer's body, but the former was not convinced. Before agreeing to sing the raga, Tansen is said to have trained his own daughter Saraswati, and Swami Haridas's disciple, Roopawati to sing the antidote to Deepak, the rain-inducing Megh raga. The story goes that when Tansen's rendering of raga *Deepak* set the lamps ablaze, filled the atmosphere with unbearable heat and scorched the singer's body, it was the Megh of these two girls that brought torrential rains from the skies and saved Tansen's precious life! If one has faith in the power of music it is not difficult to believe in some of the stories about the numerous miracles wrought by Tansen's inspired music. Even in this age of cold reason, it is not possible to dismiss all these as mere legends, for, music has been proved to possess many powers—soothing, exciting, healing and hypnotizing.

In an era of brilliant poets and composers, like Soordas, Ramdas, Tulsidas, Meerabai, Naik Baiju, Gopal Lal and others, Tansen's name stands out in rare brilliance. There are many verses showing the high esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries. Surdas wrote :— “*Vidhna asa jiya jaanike sheshahi diya na kaan; dhara meru sab dolate, sun Taanasen ki taan*” (the earth and the mountains all swing to Tansen's music). Tansen returned the compliment in a song: “*Kidhon Soor pad gaayo; tan man dhunat shareer*”. Another poet praised Tansen in a song meaning:— “The gods, human beings, the entire animate and inanimate world—are all charmed by Tansen's music”. A beautifully worded song of that time, perhaps written by poet Sreepathy ends with the line: “*Akbar shahe naran pathi, Taanasen taanan pathi*” (Akbar is the lord of men, Tansen is the lord of musical notes. *Taan* literally means a musical combination of notes.)

Modern films give utterly wrong impressions about the musical styles of Tansen's times. It must be remembered that neither Khayals nor light classical styles were in vogue in those

times. Dhruvpad and Dhamar were the classical types that existed then. The majestic, dignified Dhruvpad was the best vehicle for conveying the heroism and valour of Akbar's glorious regime. The four main styles or *Vaanis* of Dhruvpad were Gaudi, Khandari, Nawhar and Dagur. Tansen was the master of the Gaudi Vaani par excellence among the four styles, slow, dignified, and serpentine in gait, a style that evoked serenity in one's mind.

Tansen's contributions to Hindustani music have few parallels in musical history. He was that rare genius who combined in himself a brilliant practical musician (Kalawant) as well as a superb poet-cum-composer (Vaagyeyakar). In the words of O.C. Goswami, author of *The Story of Indian Music*: "Tansen was an outstanding force in the music of India. He found Indian music an unchartered ocean of Ragas and Raginis which, in his time, numbered nearly 4000. He examined and analysed them, discarded the bulk of them, and retained only 400." He created many new ragas. In his "*Ain-i-akbari*", Abul Fazl says that Tansen made many improvements in Hindustani music. For instance, he made a deep study of the four "Mutts" of Dhrupad singing and simplified Hindustani music by waiving aside these conflicting schools. He wrote: "*Sur muni ko pranam kari, sugam karo sangeet*". He reduced the bewildering number of 92 taalas into a manageable 12, wrote a valuable treatise "*Raagmaala*", in which he reveals to us many secretly guarded aspects of classical music. He composed a large number of Dohas describing various aspects of music such as Sangeet Lakshanas, Sangeet Bhedas (Marga and Desi), two kinds of Naadas, descriptions of Swaras, types of Ragas according to the number of notes in ascent and descent (Audava, Shadava and Sampoorna,) good and bad qualities (Lakshanas) of musicians, Raga Lakshanas, kinds or Jaatis, Murchchanas, Shrutis etc. All these bring a fund of information to music students and music lovers. A number of compositions believed to be Tansen's, are given in the booklet on "*Tansen*" published by the Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras. There are fine compositions in Kedara, Tilak-Kamod, Miyan-ki Malhar, Asaveri, Basant, Megh, Paraj etc. His name is invariably in the last line of each. They are beautiful compositions

in praise of gods, goddesses, nature, or reflecting the joy of festivities and festivals. One song contains a list of various descriptive names of Lord Shiva. Tansen and his descendants have contributed immensely to the art. Theirs has been the music of India for the last three centuries; it still continues to be so to a great extent.

Besides popularising old Raga-ragini, Tansen created many new and beautiful ragas like Darbari Kanada and the various ragas prefixed by the name "Miyan", and gave a fresh impetus to the declining Dhruvpad style. His compositions cover a wide variety of themes. Some extol the greatness of music ("Naad Mahima"); others are lovely devotional Dhruvpads in praise of gods and goddesses like Shiva, Krishna; Radha, Parvati, Saraswati and so on. Many are addressed to his benevolent patron-emperor ("Kahe Taanasen, Suno Shaahi Akbar"). There are poignant descriptions of Nayikaa-Bhedas, others describe the jubilant atmosphere of festivals like Hori, Madanotsav, Id, Raas Leela etc.

Living in the luxurious royal darbar, Tansen had, at one stage, begun to neglect the highly devotional music taught by his saintly guru Swami Haridas and instead concentrated on praising his royal patron. It was Gosain Maharaj who drew him back into Bhakti Sangeet. One day, at the end of a splendid recital by Tansen, Gosain Maharaj rewarded him with 1000 gold mohurs and one cheap coin, a "Kaudi", on top of it. He put the puzzled musician to shame by explaining that while the 1000 gold mohurs were in appreciation of his technical virtuosity, the single Kaudi was to express his condemnation of the fact that Tansen was paying more attention to praising his royal patron rather than God. This incident opened Tansen's eyes, and once again he followed his guru's style of devotional music, and began to compose and sing exalted panegyrics glorifying the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon.

It is very interesting to note that the descendants of this immortal singer branched off into two fruitful lines, an illusrious line of Vainiks from his daughter Saraswati, and an equally distinguished line of Rababiyas from his sons. There are some musicologists who say that although Tansen remained a Hindu throughout his life, he had a Hindu wife as well as a

Muslim wife: they feel that Bilaskhan and Tanatarangkhan were from the latter, whereas Suratsen and Saratsen were from the former.

Maharaja Samokhan Singh of Simhalgarh, another well-known disciple of Swami Haridas was an outstanding Vainik of those times. This proud Rajput ruler refused to obey Akbar's order to present himself in the imperial court. In the battle that ensued, he fell fighting, and his equally brave and talented son Kunwar Misri Singh was captured and brought to the Emperor's Court. Dejected and humiliated, Misri Singh at first refused to touch his Veena. But gradually, Akbar's kind hospitality and generosity, and Tansen's affection thawed him. One day, Tansen's excellent music inspired him to pick up his Veena and accompany him. The sittings (*mehfil*) that ensued must have been something out of this world. Tansen and Misri Singh became very attached to each other, and the bond of affection was further strengthened when Tansen gave his only daughter Saraswati in marriage to Misri Singh who now became "Naubad Khan," Naubad being the Persian word for "misri" or sugarcandy. This marriage produced a great line of Beenkars (or Vainiks) beginning with Sher Khan. The great Khayal composers Sadarang and Adarang descended from this line. There is even a belief that the name Saraswati Veena was given as a homage to Saraswati, the daughter of Tansen and wife of Misri Singh, the great Vainik.

Tansen's sons Bilaskhan, Suratsen, Saratsen, and Tarangsen perpetuated a glorious line of Rababiyas from whom have descended the great Sarod artistes of today. Pupillary descendants of both these lines have preserved for us the ancient traditions of Hindustani music, vocal as well as instrumental.

Thus Tansen and his descendants have kept the torch of Hindustani music traditions burning bright from generation to generation for four centuries. When Tansen died in Agra on 26th April 1586 (or 1589?) the Emperor Akbar exclaimed in grief; "Musical gatherings are gone from this earth. All music and joys have fled with Tansen's death." A popular story is that Bilashkhan Todi, a melancholy raga composed by Bilashkhan in his spontaneous outburst of grief, was so movingly rendered by Bilashkhan himself, that he was chosen by the

emperor to be the dead maestro's musical heir. Although Tansen died in Agra, he was laid to eternal rest near the tomb of Mahammad Ghaus in Gwalior, such is the common belief. For years and years, the place remained forgotten and neglected. It was in the early quarter of this century that Pandit Bhatkhande, the great devotee of music, got his first chance to visit this spot in order to pay his homage to Sangeet Samrat Tansen. The sight of the dilapidated tomb brought tears into his eyes. Placing some flowers on the tomb, Bhatkhande made a mute supplication to the great departed soul : "Oh great one! Bless me and help me to make this city intensely musical once again".

Thanks to Pandit Bhatkhande's ceaseless efforts, not only did Gwalior become a centre of music once again, but Tansen's tomb was reconstructed, and the grand annual Tansen URS Music Festival was also started on the lines of Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival in Thiruvaiyyaru. Pandit Bhatkhande's noble wish is fulfilled each year when thousands of music lovers and reputed musicians from all over the country assemble around the tomb and pay homage to Sangeet Samrat Tansen whose contributions to Hindustani music are unique and everlasting.



HAZRAT AMIR KHUSRAU
(1253-1325)



SANGEET SAMRAT TANSEN
(1532-1595)



SWAMI HARIDAS
(1537-1632)

MAHARAJA SWATI TIRUNAL
(1813-1847)





KHAN SAHEB AMRITSEN
(1814-1894)

KUDAU SINGH PAKHAWAJIYA
(1815-1910)



Chapter III

Swami Haridas

While writing about the traditions and history of Hindustani classical music, the general tendency has been to give the entire credit for the growth of classical music to the Moghul courts. Undoubtedly, the Moghul kings and the upper classes of those colourful times encouraged the arts of music and dance with their lavish patronage and appreciation. But this is really only a partial view and remains only part of the story of the development of Hindustani classical music.

The temples of the North, especially the sacred Brajbhoomi, remained the very heart of our country where, from time to time flourished an amazingly large number of saints, poets, musicians, devotees, and Vagyeyakars. The Vaishnava cult which thrived here, has been inextricably interwoven with the rich flowering of our classical music traditions. The dominating theme of Hindu paintings, poetry, literature, music and dance has been the Radha Krishna theme of the Vaishnava cult. Especially our music and dance have drawn inspiration and nourishment from the *bhakti* of these Krishna devotees. Every particle of dust in Brajbhoomi was made sacred by the Leelas (divine sports) of Lord Krishna, and the place echoed with the impassioned devotional music of great saint-singers. Among these, it is Swami Haridas of Brindaban whose name comes uppermost in our mind. Brindaban was the vital centre of the Vaishnava cult and the highest classical

music traditions, and the place was for ever thronging with a large number of great saints, musicians, composers, poets, and bhaktas. The keertanas of those times were actually Dhrupads set in classical ragas and talas, and many of them are sung even today. The Dhrupad style and Braj Bhasha dominated Hindustani music in those times, and Swami Haridas was a master of both, a true "Vagyeyakar" who exalted the Dhrupad-Parampara by composing a large number of Dhrupads in the mellifluous Braj Bhasha. To Swami Haridas, Hindustani music owes a large debt; few gurus bequeathed such a brilliant galaxy of pupils. He has enriched not only the music, but also the poetry and the culture of our country.

Today, most people know Swami Haridas merely as the revered guru of Tansen, but few are aware of his lasting contributions to the world of music, and fewer still will believe that he was a greater musician than Tansen himself. Tansen achieved more worldly fame and acclaim because he adorned the magnificent and awe inspiring court of Emperor Akbar. But Swami Haridas, like Saint Thyagaraja, was an ascetic who turned away from worldly pleasures and rewards, because both of these saint-musicians found bliss in the path of bhakti through the medium of music. In the sphere of Hindustani music, Swami Haridas occupies the same place as saint Thyagaraja in Karnatic music although their favourite deities (Ishta Devatas) were different. Whereas Swami Haridas was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna (Bihariji), Thyagaraja was a devotee of Rama Naadopasana was the medium of their bhakti-marga. Swami Haridas was the great poet of love for the Divine pair, the selfless devotee of Radha-Krishna (Shyama-Shyam), the great singer who sanctified the very atmosphere of Nidhuban in Brindaban by his bhakti. All day and night, he lived in communion with God through his music and devotion. Although he was a prolific composer, not a word has he mentioned about his family or personal life. Hence the entire story of his life is shrouded in legends and popular stories.

There are different versions about Haridas' early boyhood. Some say that his grandfather Gadadhar (a Saraswat Brahmin) and grandmother Chitradi, originally lived in Uchchagram near

Multan in the Punjab, now in Pakistan. Unable to bear the aggression of the Yavanas (Greek overlords), they set out of Multan accompanied by a large number of religious minded Hindus. Travelling slowly in a caravan of bullock-carts, they finally settled down in village Khera near Aligarh. Some people even claim that this village was renamed as "Haridaspur" after the birth of Haridas. Others believe that Haridas' parents Asudhir and Gangadevi had further migrated to Rajpur village near Brindaban before the birth of their three sons, Haridas (1537), Jagannath (1541), and Govindraj (1545). They were a very devout couple who revered saints and Sadhus, and therefore, their children were born and brought up in this deeply religious environment. Right from his childhood, Haridas was a strangely thoughtful boy, deeply sensitive to the beauties of nature, utterly indifferent to games, and a seeker of solitude. The small boy was often discovered seated all alone beside some river, or in some lonely forest, lost in the contemplation of the beauty and glory of the divine pair (Krishna Radha) enshrined in his heart. With the hope of changing his ascetic temperament, the loving parents married him off at the age of fourteen to a sweet young girl, Harimati. But even this virtuous girl could not alter his ways nor attract him into the life of an ordinary house-holder. A few years later, when Haridas decided to sever all family ties and go to Brindaban, his neglected bride plucked up courage for once to confront and ask him: "My lord; why is it that there are no mental or physical bonds between you and me as in the case of other married couples? Have I said or done anything to offend you?" Haridas smiled compassionately, and consoled Harimati, "Harimati, the union in this world is not a permanent one. We meet in this world, only to be parted sooner or later. It is wiser to love and adore Krishna, the Lord of the Universe".

In his early twenties, Haridas left his home and wandered in many sacred pilgrimage centres and spots but ultimately, it was in Brindaban with its natural serenity and beauty that he found the ideal place for his Naadopasana, his chosen path of Bhakti. When Vaishnavism spread all over the north, it also included a deep love for music. Brajbhumi became the focal centre of our music. Haridas was the most outstanding among

the bhaktas, an accomplished singer and a peerless devotee, who sanctified the very atmosphere of Braja. His entire life was a shining example of lofty detachment and selflessness. His only worldly possessions were a set of old clothes and an earthern pot. Every particle of dust in Braj bhoomi was held sacred by him. Contemplating on the pure waters of the Yamuna or on the star studded canopy of the sky above, Swami Haridas seemed to be in constant communion with Lord Krishna. Lost in his musical trances, he was able to hear the heavenly melodies from the Bansuri of the divine flute-player. Just as Saint Thyagaraja had darshans of Sri Rama, Swami Haridas also is said to have had a vision of his Baanke Behari in 1567.

One of the greatest Dhrupad singers and composers (Vaagyayakar) that we have had, he has left a legacy of a large number of Prabandhas and Dhrupads which are still being sung in the temples. Swami Haridas was such a passionate bhakta of Radha-Krishna that he was regarded as an incarnation of "Lalita Sakhi", the enternal companion (Sahachari or Sakhi) watching the endless divine sports of the ever-youthful divine pair. He followed the Sakhi-Bhava cult in which Lord Krishna is considered the Lord of the Universe and all his devotees are his Sakhis. Drenched in this *madhura bhakti*, he was constantly singing the glories of Shyama-Shyam. His music was not for worldly entertainment but it was the path of his devotion. He did not believe in rituals nor in pilgrimages. Once he settled in Nidhiban Nikunj, he never left that place. The scholars and poets of his Sampradaya also never went out of Brindaban. Bhakta Vyasa calls him "the *ananya nripati*," and Nabhdadas calls him "*gaayan kala ka gandharva*." His successors in the Sampradaya have included many fine poets—Beethal, Vipul, Viharidas, Rasiklal, Lalit Kishoridas, Peetambardas, Sheetaldas, and others. Haridas's two important works are, *Kelimal*, and *Ashtaadasa Sidhdhant Ka, Pad*. In the former, he has mentioned and used eleven main ragas—Nat, Gauri, Kanhada, Kedara, Kalyan, Sarang, Bibhas, Bilawal, Malhar, Gaud, Basant, and composed several "padas" in each. He mentions several musical instruments like Mridang, Dhap, Jhaanjh, Manjeera, Kinnari, Rabab and Bansi. But in the

portraits and sketches of Swami Haridas, we find him armed with only a small Tanpura.

He was not only a superb saint-singer but was also endowed with many wonderful yogic powers. There are several stories of how he cured the pride of Prahashananda (a Yogi from the Himalayas), the greed of another one called Dayaram, and how he removed the veil of maaya (illusion) from the eyes of Raja Rajaram Badhel of Orjha, and so on.

Swami Haridas was the Guru of a large number of shishyas, but the "Naad Vinod" specially mentions eight of them who achieved great fame and influence. They were Tanna (Tansen), Baiju, Gopal Lal, Madanrai, Ramdas, Diwakar Pandit, Somnath, and Soursen. Baiju from a village (Champaner) in Gujerat later on became a favourite court musician of Raja Mansingh of Gwalior. Tanna at first became a court musician of Rewa, but was soon elevated into Sangeet Samrat Tansen, the brightest gem in the court of Emperor Akbar. Madanrai and Ramdas migrated to Delhi, Somnath and Soursen settled in the Punjab. Gopal-lal achieved fame as a Gayak and as a Nayak in the Kashmir darbar. These brilliant disciples of Swami Haridas composed numerous Dhrupads, Dhamars, Taranas, Triwats, Ragmalikas, and Chaturang, and created many new ragas, all of which have enriched Hindustani music considerably. They continued the devotional music tradition of their saintly guru, although they also had to compose and sing songs in praise of their royal patrons. Swami Haridas never left his humble hut in Brindaban. Therefore, the great rajas and maharajahs, and the great Emperor Akbar himself had to go to his secluded hut in order to obtain his darshan and hear his divinely inspired singing. It is said that the emperor disguised himself as the Tanpura-carrier of Tansen in order to get admission into the guru's hut. Swami Haridas' music impressed him so deeply that on their way back, Akbar asked Tansen: "How is it that even you cannot sing as wonderfully as your great master?" Tansen replied: "Your majesty ! I have to sing in order to please my emperor who is a mere mortal; but my master sings only for the Emperor of Emperors. I am merely a pale moon that draws a bit of light from my guru who is a veritable Sun in the firmament of music".

Swami Haridas was lucky to be born at a time when the whole country was enjoying peace and prosperity under the rule of Akbar. Brindaban was surcharged with the vibrations of the Bhakti cult, and a large number of saint musicians converged into the sacred Brajbhumi such as Swami Vallabhacharya, Srinathji, Gosai Vithaldas, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Raghunathdas, Goswami Hitaharivamsaji, Gokuldas, and the Ashtachhap poets. Swami Haridas had deep ties of affection with many of them, especially with Swami Hariram Vyas, a great Vainik, and for Hitaharivamsaji, of the Radhavallabh Sampradaya. The two main Sampradayas or styles of traditional devotional music were the Nimbarki, and the Radhavallabhpanthi. Poet Jaidev belonged to the former. Among his successors was Aasdheerdev, the father of Swami Haridas. The followers of both the styles enriched the classical Keertan traditions. Swami Haridas' songs were sung to the accompaniment of the rasdhari dance traditions which later on, flowered into the religious Kathak of the temples of the North.

From the age of 25 when he renounced all wordly ties, until his death in 1632, Swami Haridas lived in Nidhiban-Nikunj which has become a sacred spot for all subsequent generations of musicians. Swami Haridas Sammelans are held annually in many places in Northern India but the most important is the annual Haridas Festival held in Brindaban where a large number of reputed musicians gather and pay their homage to this great composer and saintly musician through their musical outpourings.

Chapter IV

Maharaja Swati Tirunal

While considerable literature has been published regarding the lives and compositions of the Trinity of Karnatic Music, one often feels the inadequacy of information available on the prolific contributions of Maharaja Swati Tirunal to Indian music. This may be because the Trinity (Thyagaraja, Shyama Sastry and Muthuswami Dikshitar) had the advantage of an unbroken Guru Shishya Parampara; but Swati Tirunal was a self-effulgent royal star with no musical lineage. Just as the Trinity were responsible for the glorification of Tanjore as the biggest centre of Karnatic music, it was Swati Tirunal who drew Travancore in golden colours on the musical map of the South.

He was the greatest figure in Kerala's musical tradition, ranking with the Trinity in the history of music—Thyagaraja (1767-1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (1776-1835) and Shyama Sastry (1762-1827). What he achieved as a ruler and as a musician during his brief life span of 34 years has few parallels in history, and could be possible only for a many-splendoured genius like Swati Triunal. “The traditional culture of the Malabar coast displayed its last autumnal flowering in the courts of Travancore and Cochin. This was most magnificently in evidence in Travancore during the reign of Maharaja Swati Tirunal (1813-1847) who gathered around him a court of poets and musicians as splendid as Martanda Varma’s in the 18th century”. (*Kerala*, George Woodcock,).

The princely families of Kerala had for nearly 18 centuries upheld their ancient literary traditions and nurtured the arts of music, dance, etc., through the ages. Though Swati Tirunal's reign was not long in duration, it has become the most memorable in the history of the State for the remarkable progress it made in various spheres—arts, culture, literature, education, and administration.

These achievements become even more admirable when one realises that all these were against the background of the "first rumblings of political turmoil in India" when the British resident was constantly trying to meddle in the administration. This was intolerable to a ruler with a high sense of self-respect, of his duties towards his subjects, and of pride in the rich traditions that he had inherited. There is no doubt that he steadfastly stood up to defend his legitimate powers and freedom, but how much his hypersensitive soul must have suffered, ultimately undermining his health! But the musical genius, the creative artist, and intense *Bhakta* in him helped him to turn more and more "to the pleasures of art, to the solace of the spirit and the profound peace of mystic communion with lord Padmanabha".

This brilliant meteor of the Travancore royal family was born on April 16, 1813. As there was no other male heir in the entire family, the people acclaimed him as *Garbhashreeman*—"the blessed one crowned even before his birth". His father *Rajaraja* Varma was a great scholar with rare spiritual attainments. His mother Gauri Lakshmi Bai and his aunt Gauri Paravati Bai reigned as Queen Regents on his behalf until he attained majority. His full name was Sri Padmanabha Dasa Vanchibhoopala Sri Rama Varma, Kulasekhara Perumal, but he is better known as Maharaja Swati Tirunal (as per his asterism—or born under the Swati star). At the age of 16, he ascended the throne, and his achievements during the 18 years of his reign sound almost incredible. At a most critical period in the history of the State, he bore the heavy responsibilities of administration with confidence and efficiency, strove unceasingly for the welfare of his subjects, modernised the judiciary, laid the foundations of modern education by establishing English schools, and encouraged the growth of engineering, agriculture

astronomy, and the Press. However, it is his fame as a musician composer, a patron of arts, letters, music and dance, and as a devout devotee of Sri Padmanabha Swami (Vishnu), that has outshone the other aspects of his many-faceted genius.

The young prince grew up in close contact with some of the brilliant men of culture of the time such as Irayiman Tampi (the great poet-musician-dramatist) Kshirabdi Shastri (the well-known spiritual preceptor) and others. Genius will do what it must. By the age of 13, the prince revealed a fantastic command over numerous languages, Sanskrit, English, Persian, Arabic, Telugu, Canarese, Marathi and Hindustani, besides his mother tongue Malayalam. Col. Welsh, in his *Military Reminiscences*, writes how astounded he was by the 13 year-old prince's proficiency in so many languages. That this was no fictitious story is still evident to us from the large number of songs that he has composed and left for posterity in many of these languages. No wonder that his contemporaries felt convinced that Swati Tirunal was no ordinary mortal, but some one rare and blessed, who was born with all the Samskara that he had acquired in many previous births. His court was adorned by luminaries in various fields—scholars like Erawivarman Thampuran, Hindustani musicians like Punjab Sulaiman and Alauddin, Hari Katha experts like Meruswami from Maharashtra, Lakshman Das from Gwalior, the famous Vadivelu brothers Chinniah, Ponniah, and Shivanandam from Tanjore, the great Vainik Venkatadri Bhagavathar, vocalists like Kannaiyya (a disciple of Thyagaraja), Parameswar and Ganapathi Bhagavathars, etc. In the midst of this bright galaxy of artistes, Swati Tirunal shone resplendant “as the full moon surrounded by stars”.

His ambition was to assimilate the best in all the traditions and revitalize the native heritage. They all drew inspiration from him and thrived under his patronage. The two most outstanding qualities of the Maharaja were his rich musical genius and his dominating devotion for his tutelary deity-Sri Padmanabha Swami (whose temple still stands opposite the palace of Tranvancore). The Maharaja was the “literary heir of the Kulasekhars” (of the 8th and 9th centuries) who poured out their Bhakti in immortal Sanskrit and Tamil verses. The

“*Bhakti-Manjari*” which comprises of 1000 and odd stanzas is one of his great achievements. He has also left for us a treatise on the Theory of Music in his own hand-writing (in the Grantha script). He covered a vast gamut and variety of compositions “from very simple pieces to highly technical ones which baffle even experts”. His musical compositions cover an amazing variety of Karnatic as well as Hindustani styles—Varnams, Kritis, Ragamalikas, Kirtans, Harikathas, Padams, Dhrupadas, Khayals, Thumris, Tappas and of course, Bhajans. All this was couched in his own individual style and in a simple diction that goes straight to the hearer’s heart. His lyrical, deeply devotional compositions in various languages are in praise of the many gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, but the majority are dedicated to his “Ishta Devata”, Lord Padmanabha. In the annual festivals (Utsavams) of the Padmanabhaswamy Temple even today, Swati Tirunal’s Utsava-Prabhandhas (couched in the Sanskrit-Malayalam combined Manipravalam style) are sung for ten days, and his special Navaratri-keertanas are sung during the nine days of Navaratri Pooja. His compositions cover not only a large number of current and popular *ragas*, but also many rare ones like Dwijawanti, Desakhi, Suddha-Bhairavi, Lalita-Panchamam, Saranga, Malavi, Gopika-Vasantam, etc. In some of his compositions, he has skilfully interwoven Chollukettus and Swarachittas in the tradition of the ancient daruprabandhas. The royal composer’s close familiarity with Kathakali, and Harikatha, are obvious from the numerous Kathakali-Padams that he composed, and from his Kuchelopakhyanam and Ajamilopakhyanam which are remarkable blends of “mellifluous sweetness of sound in exquisite harmony with the sense”. Emotional intensity and musical melody are interwoven deftly. His Swarajati Keertanmas and Ragamalikas alone number more than 300!

A large number of the Mohiniattam dance songs that have survived a long period of eclipse, are compositions of this poet-king of Kerala. It is also believed that the Mohiniattam style of dancing was born as a result of the fusion of two styles—Bharatanatyam and Kathakali, and it reached the zenith of its glory under Maharaja Swati Tirunal’s fruitful patronage. A great connoisseur of dance and music, he composed 75

Kathakali Padams, as well as many lyrical Padams and Thilanas for Mohiniattam. The fact that this dance form declined after Swati Tirunal's death confirms the belief that this style blossomed out fully under his care.

Those who indulge in the petty linguistic squabbles of today should feel ashamed when they look at the broad-mindedness and far-sightedness of this noble ruler of Kerala. Here was an enlightened poet-king who may not have harangued about "the urgent need for the emotional and cultural integration of India" but who made an astonishingly lasting and inimitable contribution towards the realization of this ideal more than a century ago. A learned man, and a rare linguist, he could speak in all the principal Indian languages as well as in some foreign ones. He will be ever remembered as one of the last great classical composers, and as one of the most devotional and prolific composers of songs in various Indian languages. He covered a vast gamut and variety of compositions, from very simple pieces to highly technical ones. His Hindustani compositions alone should be enough to enshrine his name permanently in the list of immortal composers. Dhrupadas, Khayals, Thumris, Ghazals, Tillanas Ragamalikas, and Bhajans—all these types have been successfully covered by him. This in itself was an achievement yet to be paralleled in musical history. More than a hundred years after his death, All India Radio was able to broadcast several National Programmes based on some of the Hindustani compositions of this rare royal composer.

Swati Tirunal's genius was so multi-faceted that he has left his indelible impress on every aspect of the life and history of his times. As he lived in not-too-distant a past, we still hear about his "goodness, nobility, generosity, his high sense of justice, and his unbounded solicitude for the welfare of his subjects". A man of extraordinarily progressive views, rare vision, and bold ideas, Swati Tirunal had to suffer a great deal of frustration. But the proud prince shared his anguish with no one on earth. Out of "the terrific turbulence that engulfed him, he built a haven of beauty", and raised strains of exquisite melody from "his tortured heart-strings". Through all his compositions runs the deep undercurrent of his intense

Bhakti, an utter detachment from worldly pleasures, and the obsessive craving of this genuine Vaishnava devotee to attain Mukti (salvation) through Bhakti and to merge with the Supreme. The anguish of his heart burst out in many of his songs : "Oh Lord Padmanabha: Have pity on your devotee. Why this delay? Who cares for me but you, the embodiment of mercy".

So touching and genuine were his impassioned and repeated prayers to Lord Padmanabha (Vishnu) that Swati Tirunal Maharaja at the young age of 34, attained Sayujyam (union with the Supreme Being). But the brilliance of his versatile genius continues to shed lustre on the world of music and dance, and the lamp he lit more than 150 years ago has grown into "a big beacon-light burning brighter and brighter with the passage of years".

Chapter V

Rahimsen and Amritsen

Rahimsen and Amritsen, who lived in the 19th century were two of the brightest luminaries in the firmament of Sitar. Although they were father and son, guru and shishya, they were both equally brilliant sitariyas so that their names are often mentioned in the same breath as if it was an individual's name Rahimsen, Amritesn. Nothing is known of the date of birth and death of Rahimsen but it is authentically known that Amritsen was born in 1814 and lived for eight decades. Descended from a great line of Dhrupad singers and "vainikas" beginning with the immortal Sangeet Samrat Tansen himself, Rahimsen and Amritsen had the bluest of musical blood in their veins. Rahimsen's grandfather Muradsen was a well known Dhrupadiya and Rahimsen had his training in sitar from his father-in-law Dulah Khan who was a pupil and nephew of Masit Khan, the unforgettable originator of Masitkhani gat. Dulah Khan was an accomplished teacher, well trained in sitar, in Dhrupad singing as well as in playing on the veena. Rahimsen had the full benefit of all three styles through a synthesis of which he evolved a rich style of his own. Rahimsen had received intensive Dhrupad training from his father Sukhsen, a reputed Dhrupadiya whom his admirers had named as Sukhchain on account of the pleasing and appealing style of his music. After his loving father's death Rahimsen never felt like singing. Therefore, he learnt sitar from his father-in-law Dulah Khan.

In those days, no one thought highly of the sitar. When someone spoke derogatively of the instrument, Rahimsen retorted: "No doubt, the Dhrupad is like a grand jewel, and the sitar is like a mere piece of stone but I want to polish this piece of stone into a rare gem."

In his informative volume *Hamhare Sangeet Ratna* Shri Laxminarayan Garg gives accounts of some memorable performances of Rahimsen. In order to test and humiliate Rahimsen, a rich music patron of Lucknow once arranged a grand mehfil at his residence. In this mehfil, the host had specially invited a celebrated professional songstress to render some of her masterpiece Thumris. Her renderings kept everyone in such a spell that no other musician could have dared to perform after her. It was a big challenge for Rahimsen. However, he gave such a memorable recital that the songstress rushed to touch his feet in all humility.

Rahimsen used to excel in Maseetkhani which is characterised by gravity, dignity and purity in ragas and is confined to vilambit and madhyalaya. He used to tell his son Amritsen: 'My son ! concentrate on the Sitar only, because it is an instrument with unlimited potentialities. A man who tries to dabble in many instruments is no better than a dhobi's dog.'

Rahimsen had three sons : Amritsen, Nyamatsen, and Lalsen. All three were gifted Sitariyas and showed great promise, but unfortunately, before they could blossom out fully and achieve fame, the lives of Nyamatsen and Lalsen were prematurely cut short by "fate's abhorred shears". These two tragic deaths were great shocks to Rahimsen and to his only surviving son Amritsen. Amritsen himself had no issue. Therefore, later on in life, he adopted Nihalsen as his son and trained him up well in Sitar along with a number of other disciples.

Rahimsen taught his art to many pupils, but his son Amritsen emerged as the most brilliant of them all. Born with extraordinary talent, Amritsen through intensive training soon attained great mastery on Sitar. At the age of 10 he made his debut as an accompanying Sitariya for his father. At 13, he gave his first solo concert in public. At 14, he was appointed a court-musician by the Nawab of Jhajhar who paid him a

handsome monthly salary apart from providing him with food, lodging, servants, clothes and other paraphernalia of comfortable living. Rahimsen had known penury and hardship before his son's birth, but the son brought him good fortune.

Amritsen was luckier than his father, because throughout his good long life, he lived in great comfort and style. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and a Sitar in his arms, as it were:

Such early success could turn the heads of most young men, but Amritsen had an exceptionally strong character, as is evident from his dignified and blameless career. Continued success and prosperity never went to his head. Although he lived in great courtly comfort and esteem, Amritsen's humility, his concern for others, his respect for holy men, his deep devotion to his art, and complete lack of desire for amassing material wealth—all these rare qualities remained unaltered throughout his long life of 8 decades.

Nearly all his life, Amritsen flourished as a court musician and teacher to the rulers of one state after another. Many of the affluent rulers of those days were genuine connoisseurs and patrons of music. They vied with one another to get musical jewels like Rahimsen and Amritsen in their court. Rahimsen and Amritsen's first employment was in the court of the Jhajhar Nawab. Rahimsen was the Nawab's Guru: and the fourteen years old Amritsen was appointed a full-fledged court musician. One day it is said that at the Nawab's insistence, they had to play Rag Sorat. Soon after they started, a big black cobra crawled into the court to the utter terror of the listeners. It sat listening entranced. As soon as the recital was over, it crawled away majestically without a glance at the scared crowd that sat there. There are several stories about the great power of Rahimsen-Amritsen's Sitar over man and nature - how their Sitar recitals cured a certain ruler's insomnia; and another's high fever, how birds were attracted by their sweet Sitar strains, how they seemed to evoke response from even the winds and moon, and how one pupil went berserk in despair, crying, "I will never be a good enough pupil for such a great teacher". Such power of music over man, and beast and nature does not seem to have been unfamiliar until recent times.

Once, Amritsen's recital in court surpassed his father's and everyone remarked about it. But the proud and pleased father said "If anyone but my son had played like that, I would have taken poison and killed myself in humiliation. But today I feel proud that it is *my son* who has excelled me."

Father and son had the rare quality of humility. During a recital once, Rahimsen was completely absorbed in his Sitar, and at one stage when he played a superb piece, the appreciative phrase "Wah Wah" burst out from him in sheer joy and self forgetfulness. But suddenly he realized what he had done! He felt so ashamed at this self praise, that he wanted to inflict some punishment with a knife on his "boastful" tongue and he refused to play any more that night.

Amritsen was keen on the "Swarsingar" too, but Rahimsen strictly forbade his practising on any instrument but the Sitar. "Concentrate on the Sitar only" was his firm admonition. The son followed this, and fulfilled his father's hopes fully as a Sitariya.

Amritsen's second employment was as the Guru of Raja Shivdan Singh of Alwar. The royal disciple kept him in great style and reverence. It is said that Amritsen was the only instrumentalist who could baffle Kudausingh, the unbeatable Pakhawajiya of that time.

After some time, Amritsen migrated to Delhi from where he was invited to Jaipur by Maharaja Ramsinghji. The royal patron had unbounded affection and respect for him and he kept "this valuable musical gem" in his court in utmost comfort. Many are the stories of Amritsen's inspired performances in the "Roopniwas Bagh" of Jaipur. One such story is that once Amritsen elaborated Rag Kalyan on eight successive days, each day's interpretation being entirely new and different from the previous days. On one occasion, Amritsen was, much against his will, forced to perform on his Sitar immediately after a great Swarsringar recital by Sadiq Ali and Kazim Ali, two of the greatest Swarsingar artistes of the time. These two had supreme self-confidence and seldom acknowledged the greatness of other musicians. Amritsen, therefore started diffidently. However, that day he gave such a superb performance, that Sadiq Ali and Kazim Ali remarked: "Some celestial

Guru seems to have trained Amritsen. Otherwise, how could he have played so well after us!"

Bahadursen, the great Rabab and Sursingar artiste of the time refused to perform after Amritsen, saying : "No, I shall not play after him. He is the crown of our lineage."

While still a state musician in Jaipur, the ruler of Nepal invited Amritsen to participate in a grand music festival arranged by him. Accompanied on the Tabla by Lucknow's famous Kalka Prasad Kathak, Amritsen gave a memorable performance. The ruler of Nepal was very much impressed and rewarded him lavishly. People who heard his Yaman and Bhimpalasi in Indore say that the two ragas kept echoing in their ears for days and days. The ruler of Indore (Tukajirao) honoured him by presenting him with an emerald necklace unclasped from his own royal neck!

The last phase of his life was spent under the loving care and patronage of the Scindia of Gwalior. Amritsen was so happy there that he turned down the Iran monarch's invitation and offer of magnificent emoluments. Such loyalty pleased the Scindia (Ramsinghji) very much. A most sincere artiste, Amritsen would never let down an audience. At his brother Lalsen's marriage, a huge crowd had been expectantly waiting to hear Amritsen's Sitar; but no one knew that one finger of his hand had become painfully septic. Loth to disappoint his eager audience, he sat down to play. Gradually he became so rapt in his Sitar that he forgot his pain and continued to play until the listeners noticed drops of blood on the Sitar.

During his last illness, Amritsen was well looked after by his patron ruler, and by his own adopted son Nihalsen. In 1894 at the ripe old age of eighty, he died on Paush Krishnashtami day.

Amritsen was as healthy and good looking as he was kind and noble-hearted. Tall and sturdy, he looked majestic in his courtly dress "angarakha" and turban. Well-disciplined and devoid of any vices, devout and simple by nature, dedicated to his art, dignified, noble, generous and courteous in his ways Amritsen was truly a gentleman and a great musician of the "shahi zamana", the courtly age. Never craving after money,

wealth came to him unsought. He would never fix beforehand his fee for a performance, but would always leave it to his host and patron. "Let him hear me first, and then pay according to his ability, and according to the pleasure my Sitar gives him" was what he used to say. Very respectful towards pious people, he was always willing to give free performances for them. Holy men used to call him "Amrit-kalas" (i.e. a receptacle of nectar), in deep love and respect. Other artistes used to refer to him as the "Emperor of Sitar". Completely devoid of pride, meanness and any carping spirit, he was noble and charitable. He helped many poor disciples, had great regard for the Hindu religion, and even followed many Hindu customs. Some of his well-known pupils were his brother Nyamatsen, his nephew the famous Amir Khan, Nihalsen (his adopted son), Hafiz Khan, and the music loving rulers of Jhajhar, Alwar, Jaipur, and Gwalior. An impressive list indeed.

Descended from Tansen and his son Tantarang, Rahimsen-Amritsen belonged to the Seniya Gharana of instrumental music, and the "Gubarhar Vani" of Dhrupad singing. They enriched the technique of Sitar by a judicious mixing of the "Alap-ang" of the Dhrupad, the 'Gat' part of Veena, and the elaborative style of Khayal. By such intelligent mixing, they brought Sitar to the pinnacle of its glory. They played mostly the Masitakhani gats which being in slow and restful tempo, give full scope to the beautiful elaborations of each raga. Speaking of the contributions made by great Sitariyas, it has been rightly said that while Amir Khusrav was the renovator of Sitar, and Masit Khan its great exponent, Rahimsen and Amritsen were its great propagators.

Among the very senior group of contemporary musicians today there are a few who have had the good fortune to have listened to Amritsen in person. One of the well known aged instrumentalists of today was telling me about the great masters he had heard in his younger days. After recounting some of Amritsen's unforgettable performances, this veteran regretfully and sadly said: "Will anyone hear such a Sitariya in future". Unfortunately, Rahimsen and Amritsen lived at a time when the strains of hauntingly lovely music could not be caught and processed for future generations. Today, the ways

and means for the diffusion and preservation of music are unlimited. Through discs and tapes, the art of each musician is caught and immortalised for the benefit of future generations. But we of this age have to be content with hearing stories and legends about great artistes of preceding generations. There is no way in which we can hear them, we have to be content with merely hearing of them.

Kudau Singh Pakhawajiya*

The Mridang is perhaps one of the oldest percussion instruments in India and references to it may be seen in the *Vedas* and the Epics. In fact all the percussion instruments originated from the mridang. Because it is played on both the sides, it came to be known as Paksha Vadya (*Paksha* means side), which became Pakhawaj in colloquial use. The two main traditional styles of the Pakhawaj are the Gharana of Nana Panse of Maharashtra, and that of Kudau Singh of UP. There are many interesting episodes from the latter's life which are narrated by his pupils and descendants.

Kudau Singh was born in 1815 in a Kanyakubja Brahmin family of Banda (UP). His father's name was Gappa. The boy lived a happy life basking in his parents' love during the first 9 years of his life. After the sudden and shocking death of his parents when he was only nine, the orphan's life was filled with misery because not a single relative of the family took any interest in him, nor did any one extend a helping hand to him. The boy left his desolate home and wandered around here and there until he reached the ashram of Mridangacharya Shridas. The compassionate acharya took him under his wing and began to give him lessons in mridang. According to the version of Kudau Singh's grandson (daughter's son) Kashi Prasad, Kudau Singh served his guru by looking after his cows. The guru loved him like a father, and taught him not only the

*(A great deal of information for this chapter has been gathered from Sri Pagaldasji and from a Hindi article by Babulal Goswami of Datiya.)

art of Mridang vadan, but also of Raga-Raginis. Mridangacharya Shridas was one of the foremost mridang artistes of his time, and he won handsome emoluments from Mohammad Shah Rangile for demonstrating thousands of "parans" on the mridang in the latter's lavish darbar.

When his training was complete, Kudau Singh set out on an extensive tour during which he earned much fame and many rewards by performing in the courts of various Rajas and Maharajas. He got many opportunities to accompany some of the topmost artistes of the time.

When Nawab Wajid Ali Shah ascended the throne of Awadh, he celebrated his coronation by organising a music festival in Lucknow which lasted for many days. All the leading artistes of the North assembled in Lucknow, and Kudau Singh was one of them. It is said that the entire court praised Kudau Singh's art. As for the royal patron, he was so pleased that he rewarded him with huge emoluments and a title, "Sadaa Kunwar". Never before had Kudau Singh demonstrated his rich stock of "parans" as he did before the great musicians assembled in Wajid Ali Shah's court in the year 1847. The very next year, when the Nawab organised another Music festival (*Navroz*), an open Pakhawaj competition was held between Kudau Singh and his rival Jyot Singh. Kudau Singh's descendants claim that he defeated his rival and won the big prize. No wonder his name is still mentioned with great respect in the music-circles of Lucknow. Once when Nritya Samrat Bindadin was still young in years, Kudau Singh accompanied him on the pakhawaj and was so pleased with Bindadin's inspired dancing, that he embraced the young dancer and showered praise on his art.

From Lucknow, Kudau Singh proceeded to Rampur which was the biggest centre of music during the reign of Nawab Kalbe Ali Khan, who was not only a great lover of music but also a great connoisseur. Among the great artistes who adorned his court were the Sursingar experts Amir Khan, Hussain Khan and Kutub Baksh. In Sursingar playing, Hussain Khan was considered peerless. He was a descendant from the great musical line of Pyar Khan, Basat Khan and Jaffar Khan, and had become the Nawab Sahib's guru. Hussain

Khan's Sursingar recital, accompanied on the Pakhawaj by Kudau Singh was one of the most memorable performances ever held in the court. It is said that after hours of well-matched competition, at last, the Sursingar Ustad began to show signs of fatigue but Kudau Singh went on playing tirelessly. Although Kudau Singh excelled in this musical encounter, he was pained to note the cliques among the artistes. Therefore, he did not stay long in Rampur.

Babulal Goswami of Datiya has narrated the following story learnt from the late Baba Thakurdas. Maharaja Viswanath Singh of Rewa who was a great connoisseur of the mridang, had composed some complicated parans. He proclaimed that whosoever could produce them on the mridang to his satisfaction would be amply rewarded. It is said that Kudau Singh satisfied the royal patron, and that in appreciation, the Maharaja showered $1\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs of rupees on him. Hence this particular *paran* came to be known as the *sawalakhī* *paran* (the *paran* worth one and a quarter lakh of rupees). But Kudau Singh who was never interested in saving money for himself, distributed the entire amount among the musicians who had tried and failed in the competition.

On another occasion Kudau Singh accompanied the reputed court-singer Mohammad Khan so wonderfully that the latter remarked to Maharaj Viswanath Singh of Rewa: "Your Highness, Kudau Singh is a divinely gifted Pakhawajiya". The story goes that the Maharaja presented 12 thousand rupees for this mehfil; this was in the year 1850.

Kudau Singh's next halt was in the darbar of another music lover, Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi. Many actors, singers, and instrumentalists of great repute stayed in this court. The Raja treated Kudau Singh like a member of his own family and paid him great respect. This royal patron's sudden death in the year 1853 was such a shock to Kudau Singh that he could not play on his mridang for a whole year.

Subsequently he became a court musician in Rani Lakshmi-bai's court in Jhansi. In the revolt of 1857, he was captured by the British and sent to the Datiya jail for being a close associate of the Rani. When the minor Raja Bhavani Singh ascended the throne under the Regency of his mother Rajmata Vijaykunwari,

they rescued Kudau Singh from jail. While in jail, he used to practise his parans on a stone-pillar in the cell. When news of this eccentric inmate reached the ears of Bhavani Singh, he at once found out who the prisoner was, and got him released. Another whim of Kudau Singh was that ever since this episode, he always wore an iron chain on his right leg declaring:- "I am the prisoner of the love of Datiya". This was his own special way of expressing his gretefulness to the royal patron who got him released from jail. Raja Bhawani Singh was a bold and magnanimous ruler who never hesitated to give shelter to those whom the Britishers had branded as traitors. Many musical gems adorned his court including Kudau Singh.

Kudau Singh's art was really polished and perfected in the royal courts of Lucknow, Rewa and Datiya, whose rulers encouraged him with their appreciation and lavish rewards. His real name was "Kudau Maharaj". But impressed by his fearless and bold nature, Raja Bhawani Singh gave him the title of "Singh".

Kudau Singh had an imposing personality and he was an ardent devotee of Goddess Kali. Tall, fair, and long-limbed, he used to wear a loose yellow kurta and a tahmat, and on his head a leopard-skin topee. Three thick long lines of Sindoor dominated his forehead. Around his neck he wore strings of rudraksha and crystals. His behaviour was full of humility, and the name of "Jaya Durge" was ever on his lips.

Kudau Singh's family consisted of his wife, daughter, son-in-law, and grandson Kashiprasad. His pet hobby was rearing "Bulbuls" and training them to fight. He spent much money on this hobby.

While he was in the court of the Raja of Datiya, a famous Kathak dancer from Jaipur came there and expressed his desire to dance to the accompaniment of Kudau Singh's pakhawaj. There came a stage when the tempo had become so fast that the audience could see neither the dancer's feet nor the Pakhawajiya's palms. Another memorable occasion was when he accompanied the inimitable Sitar recital of Amritsen, a descendant of Tansen. There is a famous episode in Kudau Singh's life of how he controlled a rogue-elephant in Samthar by the reverberating sounds of his mridang, and how the raja expressed

his appreciation by presenting him with an elephant and a reward of Rs. 1000 only for his reputed Gajaparan. Kudau Singh rode back on the elephant and promptly gifted it to his kind patron Raja Bhavani Singh.

Although he earned huge sums of money as gifts, he invariably distributed all of it among the needy. He just retained enough money for his own needs which included *Paan* and a bottle of alcohol which he took only in limited quantities. His day was divided between pooja of Devi Durga, and his Pakhawaj riyaz. Every night he would sit down with his 30 disciples for long sessions of riyaz. Huge candles were lit, and the practising hands were not allowed to stop until the candles were completely burnt out. His rich stock of parans had significant names like Gaj Paran, Shiv Tandav, Samudralahari, Aswaparan, Manmoran, Durgaparan, Ganeshparan, Sawalikhī paran, and Baaj bheriparan. At the time of his daughter's marriage, he is said to have given a Granth containing 1400 parans as dowry and it is said that he never used or taught these to any one as they had become his daughter's exclusive property.

After the death of his kind and loving patron Raja Bhawani Singh, Kudau Singh lost all his zest in life. In 1910, one night he was practising hard on his Pakhawaj even though he was 95 years old. Suddenly he cried out the name of his favourite deity, 'Jaya Durge', and then he just collapsed on his mridang and died.

To this day there is in Datiya a building which is known as Kudau Singh's Haveli. Although it houses a Dharamsala now, it is well known by the above name because the people there are proud of this great artiste who gave a new status to the ancient percussion instrument, Mridang. His name continues to inspire the Pakhawaj artistes of today.

Chapter VII

Nawab Wajid Ali Shah

Some years ago I saw the film '*Aavishkar*' and was impressed by the subtle and soothing manner in which the famous Lucknow Thumri "*Babul mora Naihar chchooto jaay*" in Bhairvai had been used as a haunting and recurring background refrain throughout this good film. After the picture was over and as we were returning home, I asked some of my Lucknow friends if they knew who was the composer of this very popular song. I was disappointed when they confessed that none of them knew, although they had heard this Thumri many times and liked it very much. If even Lucknowwallas are not aware of this song, one cannot expect others from other parts of the country to know anything about it.

This Bhairavi Thumri has been one of the favourites of famous light classical and classical musicians from Moizuddin, Malkajan, Gauharjan, and Ustad Faiyazkhan, to Siddheswari Devi, Begum Akhtar and Girja Devi of more recent times. But it was the late K.L. Saigal's simple, yet poignant rendering of it in the New Theatres Film "*Street Singer*" that made it an all India favourite. Even in the farthest South, I remember young people travelling miles by train or bus in order to see a New Theatres film and hear their soulful songs. Saigal did not need an orchestra "of a hundred instruments" or a cacophony of Western and Eastern instruments to support his voice and boost its volume. The barest minimum of a Harmonium and Tabla

were all that he needed to render this Thumri with an expressiveness and emotion that brought tears into every eye. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, music-lovers tried to hum and copy it the way Saigal sang. Even in some of the South Indian AIR stations, there was no ban on casual artistes having a go at this song at the end of a Karnatic recital !

Since those days, more than three decades ago, I have heard '*Babul Mora*' rendered in an infinite variety of styles by many reputed maestros of the North, and learnt about the poignant circumstances that gave birth to this sweet Thumri. It is a well-known fact that "Lucknow is the mother, and Benares the sweetheart of the thumri style." A large number of composers who thrived under the lavish patronage of the Nawab rulers of Lucknow enriched this light classical form whose popularity is mounting day by day. Among these, the name of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (the last Nawab-ruler of Lucknow) stands out in golden letters. He was not only a munificent patron of music, dance, drama, and poetry, but was himself a gifted composer, and a proficient Kathak dancer. He had received vocal training under great Ustads like Basit Khan, Pyar Khan and Jaffar Khan and Kathak training under Thakur Prasadji and Bindadin Maharaj. Although his pen-name was Qaisar, he used the pseudonym "Akhtarpiya" for his numerous compositions. Under this pen-name, he wrote over 40 works, poems, prose and Thumris. "Diwani-Akhtar", "Husn-i-Akhtar" contain his Ghazals. He is said to have composed many new ragas and named them Jogi, Juhi, Shah-Pasand, etc.

Wajid Ali Shah was most unfortunate to have ascended the throne of Awadh at a time when the East India Company was determined to grab the coveted throne of prosperous Awadh (Oudh), which was "the garden, granary, and queen-province of India." In different circumstances perhaps, he might have succeeded as a ruler because he had many qualities that make a good administrator. He was generous, kind and compassionate towards his subjects, besides being one of the most magnanimous and passionate patrons of the Fine Arts. But the British Agent, and some of the treacherous elements in the court of Awadh availed of his lavish and luxurious style of living, branded him as "a monster of debauchery, profligacy and vice",

and succeeded in banishing him from his beloved Lucknow. In recent time, one finds a turn of the tide in his favour. Attempts are being made to remove Wajid Ali Shah's tarnished image and to repaint him as a benevolent and gifted monarch who was more sinned against than sinning. Valuable books have been published recently giving a full and just assessment of his virtues as well as his vices. When he ascended the throne, he took keen interest in the administration of justice, introduced reforms, and reorganised the military department. But gradually, he sank into a life of pleasures surrounded by courtesans, singers, dancers, and eunuchs. In his book *Awadh Under Wajid Ali Shah*, Dr. G.D. Bhatnagar gives the following assessment of this ill-starred prince:— “Cast by providence for the role of an accomplished dilettante, he found himself a misfit for the high office to which he was elevated by chance. Wajid Ali Shah’s character was complex. Though he was a man of pleasure, he was neither an unscrupulous knave nor a brainless libertine. He was a lovable and generous gentleman, he was a voluptuary, still he never touched wine, and though sunk in pleasure, he never missed his 5 daily prayers. It was the literary and artistic attainments of Wajid Ali Shah which distinguished him from his contemporaries.”

When Wajid Ali Shah was a young boy, some astrologers warned his parents that he would become a Yogi, and advised them that the boy should be dressed up as a Yogi on each birthday of his so as to counteract the effect of the evil stars. When he ascended the throne in 1847 at the age of 24, he had a fabulous annual income of more than fifteen lakhs of rupees, most of which he squandered on music, dance and drama. First of all, he established his famous Parikhaana (abode of fairies) in which hundreds of beautiful and talented girls were taught music and dancing by expert-teachers engaged by the royal patron. These girls were known as Parees or fairies with fancy-names such as Sultan pari, Mahrukh Pari and so on. On each birthday of his, the Nawab would dress up as a Yogi with saffron robes, ash of pearls smeared on his face and body, necklaces of pearls around his neck, and a rosary in his hand, and walk pompously into the court with two of his Parees dressed up as Jogans. Gradually he made it into a spectacular

pageant or Mela known as *Jogia Jashan*, in which all citizens of Lucknow could participate, dressed as Yogis, irrespective of caste, and creed. In the opinion of Mr. Ranbir Singh it was this *Jogia Jashan* on his birthdays that "took the curtain up on the Hindustani Theatre". Later on, when his favourite venue, the Kaisarbagh Baradari was built, he began to stage his magnificent *Rahas* obviously a Persianised name for *Rasleela*, full of sensuous poetry, his own lyrical compositions under the pen-name "Akhtarpiya" and glamorous Kathak dances. Ranbir Singh gives details of Wajid Ali Shah's book entitled *Bani* in which the author mentions 36 types of *Rahas* all set in Kathak style (with colourful names like "Mor-Chchatri", "Ghunghat", "Salami", "Mor Pankhi" and "Mujra"), and gives exhaustive notes about the costumes, jewellery, and stage-craft. *Rahas*, prepared at a fabulous cost of several lakhs of rupees, became very popular, and was performed at the Kaisarbagh-Rahas Manzil, most probably, "the first Hindustani Theatre Hall". Many have regarded Wajid Ali Shah as "the first playwright of the Hindustani theatre", because his "*Radha Kanhaiya Ka Kissा*" staged in the *Rahas Manzil* was the first play of its kind. It featured Radha, Krishna, several sakhis, and a vidushaka-like character called "Ramchera". Songs, dances, mime, and drama were all delightfully synthesised in these *Rahas* performances. He dramatised many other poems such as *Darya-i-Tashsq*, *Afsane-i-Ishaq*, and *Bhahar-i-Ulfat*. It is said that Amanat's "*Inder Sabha*" was inspired by these dance-dramas, written, produced and staged by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah.

Today, however, his pioneer contributions in this field are seldom remembered. Kathak dance attained new heights of popularity and glory under his expert-guidance and lavish patronage. Thakur Prasadji was his Kathak guru, and the unforgettable Kalka-Binda brothers performed in his court. What with the grand pageantry of the *Rahas*, *Jogiya Jashan*, Dance dramas, and Kathak performances, Lucknow became the magnetic cultural centre where the most reputed musicians, dancers and poets of the time flourished. The greatest musicians, dancers and instrumentalists of the time enjoyed his munificent patronage and hospitality.

But all this pomp and splendour were wiped out in less than eight years. In February 1854, Wajid Ali Shah was deposed by the British Resident and exiled into far-off Matiaburj near Calcutta. Even when the shocking ultimatum was given to him, Wajid Ali Shah appealed to his beloved subjects not to offer any resistance, and to maintain peace. The touching description of the bewailing citizens of Lucknow given in the Urdu "*Asrar-i-Wajid*" has been translated into English by Dr. G.D. Bhatnagar in his book as follows.

"The condition of this town, without exaggeration, was such that on the departure of Jan-i-Alam, the life became extinct and the body of the town was left soulless. Grief rained down from every door and wall. There was no lane, bazar, or dwelling which did not wail out in full agony of separation from Jan-i-Alam. All sorts of agonies were produced in the Hindi musical tunes and notes."

Historians describe how much the people of Lucknow lamented the exile of their kind and popular ruler. Many of the poets of the time have depicted their grief in touching verses like the following :

*Lucknow bekas huwa Hazrat jo-gaye,
Fazle gul kab ayegi, kab honge aakar naghma sanjh,
Ek muddat ho gayi murgaane gulshan ko gaye*

The royal caravan "of about 1000 persons started from Lucknow on March 13, 1854 towards Calcutta via Kanpur. The parting scenes were pathetic, the whole city being thrown into gloom. Every body wept and bewailed while bidding farewell to the unfortunate king. Everywhere there was sorrow. Poor and rich, young and old, all were bewailing for the King. The citizens looked helpless and recited mournful *nauha* (dirges) in bewilderment".

As for Wajid Ali Shah, nothing caused him more agony than being forcibly parted for ever from his beloved Lucknow. It was at this tragic moment of being torn away from the city and people he loved that the following lines burst out from his sorrow-laden heart:-

*"Babul mora naihar chchooto jaay-
Chaar kahaar mil, mori doliya uthaye
Mora apna begaana chchooto Jaay"—*

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts." One can very well visualise that sad moment of parting through these touching lines. In fact this song has now come to be associated with the inevitable *bidaayi* of every bride from her parental home—that poignant moment when she is seated in a *doli* and is about to be wrenched away from her dear "babul" into the distant land of her groom. As in the case of a similar composition of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, perhaps this song also contains the allegorical meaning of a human being's last journey on this earth when the body is carried on the shoulders of 4 pall-bearers. So intense was Wajid Ali Shah's grief at that moment ! Well-versed in Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, and Braj Bhasha, he composed in a mixed dialect that is easily followed by the people of Uttar Pradesh.

Even in his exile in Matiaburj, he survived for many long years, all the while trying to keep the sweet memories of his Lucknow-era alive by recreating the musical environments of his Kaisarbagh Baradari. The banished king had been given a number of fine houses with *vast* grounds stretching along the banks of the River Hooghly 3 or 4 miles south of Calcutta. Because of an Earthen Dome (raised platform), people called it "Matiya Burj". The king spent lavishly out of his income of twelve lakhs of rupees per annum and before long a Second Lucknow arose in this area. "There was the same bustle and activity, same language, art, poetry, style of conversation—the same pomp and splendour, the same opulent style of living. Taking advantage of the Shia Law of *Muta*, he contracted temporary legal marriages with as many good-looking and talented girls as he fancied. Troupes of artistes congregated in his court, the best singers were enlisted into his service and there was a larger concourse of musicians in Matiyaburj than could be found anywhere else in India". (*Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*).

We come across descriptions of great musical assemblies in the Darbar Hall of Matiyaburj where the great musicians and music-lovers of Calcutta gathered to hear Wajid Ali Shah sing his favourite Lucknow-Thumris, and to marvel at his dance-performances. The Durbar Hall was lavishly and opulently decorated just as the Lucknow Baradari used to be.

Among the invitees used to be great personalities from Calcutta's music-world such as Jadu-Bhatta (Dhrupad), Aghorenath Chakravarty (Dhrupad) Sajjad Mohammad (Sitar), Dhirendranath Bose (Sarod), Shyamlal Goswami (Esraj), Rai Chand Boral, and several others. In the words of D.C. Bhattacharya, 'Rich and flexible voices filled the air. Thumri had the pride of place, particularly Wajid Ali Shah's own compositions that once held Lucknow in thrill—*Babul mora naihar chchooto jaay; Jab chchor chali Lucknow nagari; Neer bharan kaise jaun*. The songs rose to great heights of expressiveness and created a spell'.

When it ceased, Wajid Ali Shah sat in mute silence for a long while, and then expressed his feelings: "All this time I was in a dreamland as though transported by unknown hands to my Kaisarbagh Baradari. Ah, what I have left behind! Now, only the sweet memories linger."

The loyal citizens as well as their beloved ruler hoped for a long time that the latter would regain the throne of Awadh and "return to bestow a fresh spirit to the lifeless people"; but their dreams were never fulfilled. Wajid Ali Shah died on September 1, 1887 and was buried in Imambara Sibtenabad, in Matiyaburj.

Wajid Ali Shah's most popular Thumri really turned out to be one of the saddest and sweetest of parting songs.

Such are the poignant associations of this ever-popular Lucknow Thumri composed by Akhtarpiya.

"*Babul mora naihar chchooto jaay*".

CHAPTER VIII

Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan

When Khurshed Ali Khan, the most distinguished exponent of the Lucknow gharana of music (*Khayal, Thumri, Soz, Marsia* etc.) died in Lucknow in 1950 at the ripe old age of 105, many tributes appeared in the English, Hindi, and other regional papers of the time extolling his greatness and his unforgettable contributions to music. And yet, today after a lapse of just 30 years or so how many musicians or music lovers remember this great Ustad who lived his entire life in the world of music and always did all he could to enrich and pass on the great traditions of Lucknow gharana to his "shishya-parampara"? Today's musical giants can at least have the satisfaction of leaving behind for posterity samples of their art through recordings preserved in the archives of All India Radio and long playing records in the commercial market. But the maestros of old who gave so much to our musical traditions, who thrilled contemporary music lovers and patrons, and won the admiration of their rivals in the field, have, alas! gone into the limbo of forgotten persons. I had only one opportunity to hear Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan in person, but it was at a time when I had just started learning Hindustani music, and the Ustad was at the fag end of his long life. I remember his old world charm and typical 'Lucknow' personality, and could detect glimpses of what must have been glorious music when he was

younger and in better health. Even today, there must be among us quite a few music lovers who must have heard the Ustad at his best. However, whatever information I have gathered on the basis of which I am trying to reconstruct an image of this grand old musician, has been made available to me by his grandson, Momin Ali Khan, who placed at my disposal whatever scanty materials he had managed to salvage from his ancestral home in Lucknow.

Pained at the sight of the Ustad's sadly neglected plight during the last years of his life, a shocked music lover of the time had written bitterly in the *Hindustan Weekly* of Lucknow dated 28th August 1949 : "Here is a great musician who has spent his entire life in serving music, and yet people in this city do not assess his true worth. Today this great contemporary lives in a godforsaken corner of the city withering away like an ancient tree of mythical foliage. It is amazing how Lucknow—a great centre of music, has forgotten this great old artiste, and rests content with a generation of second-raters who flash and fade out intermittently.

Perhaps, it was the disillusionment caused by such "callousness" towards the truly great that compelled the Ustad's only son, Iqbal Ali Khan, to turn away from the type of life exemplified by his father, and to seek other paths like the theatre. The Ustad's grandson, Momin Ali Khan, migrated to Bombay in search of the more tantalising world of film music and is still struggling for a foothold. Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan was the prime disciple of Lucknow's unforgettable (but almost forgotten) Ustad Sadiq Ali Khan, the great exponent of Lucknow Khayal, and the pioneer of Lucknow-Thumri. Together, they belonged to the distinguished gharana of musicians like Ustads Haider Khan, Turab Khan, Sahib Khan, Pyare Khan, Raje Khan, Bakshi Ali and others. Sadiq Ali Khan flourished in the time of the last Nawab of Awadh, and it was natural that the former's chief disciple Khurshed Ali Khan got many a chance to perform in the splendid Darbar of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Sadiq Ali and Khurshed Ali were the sons of two brothers, Raje Khan and Bakshi Ali Khan. Thus, they were first cousins. When Sadiq Ali Khan married Khurshed Ali's

elder sister, they became brothers-in-law. What bound them even closer was the fact that Sadiq Ali Khan had no issue of his own. To him, therefore, Khurshed Ali was son, disciple, and musical heir, all rolled into one. Sadiq Ali's training was intensive as well as extensive. Khurshed Ali mastered the khayal and thumri styles under him, and later on, he also mastered the typical *soz*, *marsia* and *kalam* of Lucknow under the training of Syed Meer Ali Sahib of Lucknow. Khurshed Ali Khan held both his gurus in the highest reverence all his life.

Gradually, his performances attracted praise, and his fame spread. He came out in flying colours in the famous Music Conference in Beerganj, Nepal, where the greatest musicians of the time (like Ustad Rahmat Khan of Gwalior, Ustad Bande Ali Khan Beenkar and several others) had assembled. After this successful performance, Khurshed Ali Khan was invited to perform in the great *darbars* of Hyderabad, Rampur, and Gwalior, and also in cities like Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. His unique style won wide acclaim. Khurshed Ali was perhaps the last great representative of the Lucknow gharana of khayal rendering. He paid meticulous attention to the "Asthayi" and the "Antara", and to the purity of the ragas. It is said that he rendered khayals in the pure *Qawwal-Bachcha* style. He was a veritable store-house of common and rare Khayals and taalas. "Farodast" and "Sawaari" and "Jhumra" were his special favourite Taals. In the early nineteen thirties when Chaturpandit Bhatkhande went to Lucknow to start the Music College there, Khurshed Ali Khan was one of the few old masters who readily helped Pandit Bhatkhande to collect rare old compositions for notation and publication. Those were the days when the professional ustad used to conceal the *cheezens* (compositions) of their Gharanas. Khurshed Ali was a rare exception. Late Dr. Chaubey, an early student of the college, has written: "Picturing Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan in the context of those days, memory travels back when in an inside room in the College, he sat teaching some of his compositions to Principal Srikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar, who later on transcribed them. Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan sat in that room day after day giving his best while at a distance sat Pandit Bhatkhande, presiding like a Greek deity."

Perhaps it was the Ustad's generosity as a teacher that attracted so many pupils to him. Few professional ustads had such a throng of distinguished disciples which makes an impressive list—Raja Nawab Ali Khan (of Lucknow), Bhaiya Ganpatrao (a prince of Gwalior), Nasir Khan, Ghulam Hussain Khan and Miraj Khan of Fatehpur, Nabi Bux Khan of Lahore, Babban Saheb, Prem Bahadur, Ram Shankar Shukla, Mohammadi Bai, Jaddan Bai, Chinmoy Lahiri and Raibabu of Calcutta, Nawab Jaffar Ali Khan of Sheeshmahal, Nawab Chaulakhi (Wajid Mirza Bahadur), Manju Saheb, Choti Nanhi Bai, Bigganbai, Babbanjan, Badi Mohammadijan, Rais Ahmad (brother of Josh Malihabadi), Wali Hyder Saheb of Rampur, Mohamad Ali Khan (Taluqdar of Bilaspur) and others !

Khurshed Ali Khan taught a large number of khayals and thumris to his only son Iqbal Ali Khan, and gave special training to his grand-daughter Sikandar Jahan in singing Soz, Kalam, and Marsia in pure ragas and in the famed traditional Lucknow style. After a chequered career, Iqbal Ali Khan now lives in obscurity in Lucknow teaching a few students. Sikandar Jahan has settled in Calcutta, but it is said that she has maintained her traditional art by singing Soz, Marsia, and Kalam in various places during Moharram. It is reported that she can sing these in the soulful and appealing manner in which her reputed grandfather taught her to sing. Momin Ali hovers between two worlds. His mind is still fascinated by the courtly personality and glorious art of his grandfather Khurshed Ali Khan; but, necessity has compelled him to forsake this path, and seek out fresh fields and pastures in the film world of Bombay. He feels greatly distressed by the fact that neither his grandfather's personal belongings nor his few gramophone records could be salvaged and preserved for posterity by the family.

Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan was a pastmaster in all aspects of Lucknow-music popular, at that time, such as Khayal, Thumri, Soz, Marsia, etc. He sang numerous traditional as well as rare (*achchob*) ragas, but a special favourite of his was Nat-Malhar. One admirer has recorded that "whenever the Ustad sang his favourite Khayal in raga, Nat Malhar beginning with the words 'Allah Nabiji Karam Ki Boonden Barsa Deeje', dark clouds



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used to gather in the sky and a wild shower of rains followed ! Such was the miracle of his sweet voice". During Moharram, he used to recite Marsia, Sozkhani, Kalam etc "in melting tunes". His finely trained voice which covered three full octaves, remained pleasing and clear almost till the end of his life. Ustad Faiyaz Khan greatly admired this veteran maestro.

In the *Pioneer* dated 30th April 1940, there was a publicity note with the caption, "Tune in to Lucknow; Old Masters Sing From Today". "In this Series, the great Ustads will demonstrate almost forgotten ragas, and revive, as it were, the good old days when classical music was for the entertainment of Kings and Nobles—All lovers of music should tune in to Lucknow AIR at 6.25 p.m. today when the series opens with a demonstration by Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan."

Iqbal Ahmad told me that some of the Ustad's favourite ragas were Chhaynat, Pooriya, Marwa, Chandrakauns, rare Malhar varietes like Charju and Ramdasi, Zilaf, Ramkali, Bilawal varieties and so on. He usually sang Bandish-ki-Thumris in slow Chaachar-tal, and composed many Thumris, but as he never wove in his name into his compositions, we are not able to identify them now.

Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan not only embodied in himself the finest traditions of the music of Awadh, but was the true embodiment of Lucknow's culture at its best. A music lover who had known and heard the Ustad at his best has written with the highest admiration : "Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan had all the traits of a great gentleman. He was polite, unassuming, humble, and refined in every sense. I have yet to come across another Ustad having such conversational brilliance in him... This grand old musician of Lucknow who had silently borne testimony to the span of a century, used to be a past-master in the art of anecdotal chatter; he treated conversation as an art. He could revive the glorious past for us in his own inimitable way".

Gifted with a mellow and refined sense of humour, he had a great capacity for friendship. He never spoke ill of anyone, and he respected rival musicians. Altogether he was a lovable and fascinating personality, a true representative of Lucknow.

culture at its best. Even after he had crossed the century, he kept up his music.

On 15th April, 1950 the local newspapers in Lucknow carried a brief obituary : "Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan, a famous musician died here last month at the age of 105. Pupil of Ustad Sadiq Ali Khan, he was the grand old man of Lucknow's music. Raja Nawab Ali Khan, an accepted authority on music, and Bhaiya Ganpatrao were among his numerous pupils".

Ustad Khurshed Ali's large circle of admirers had once lovingly nicknamed him "the PHATAK (gateway) of Lucknow", this famed city of music and culture. And yet, how soon this great Ustad has been forgotten !

Lucknow, in the words of a disillusioned connoisseur, "with all its love for music, is a living paradox." Here was a musician who spent his entire long life in serving music. But today, how many music lovers give a thought to such maestros of the past, and how many music students are familiar with Ustad Khurshed Ali Khan's name and musical heritage ?

Chapter IX

Chaturpandit Bhatkhande

Towards the end of the last century, Hindustani music had run into "doldrums". Music had become the monopoly of a small coterie of illiterate professionals who jealously guarded their art. Living luxuriously under lavish courtly patronage, these narrow-minded custodians of music took care not to create rivals out of their own pupils. Gradually, these professionals acquired disrepute, and the Muse whom they served fell from her high pedestal into the depths of public apathy and alien contempt. The so called "intellectuals" began to look down with "moral horror" on this noble art. No other country in the world had placed music so contemptuously low, and "nowhere were the natural instincts of the young for music and rhythm so completely repressed, censored, and banned, as they happened to be in the country that Vishnu-Narain was born to serve". An utterly selfless and dedicated music-devotee was needed to create order out of chaos, to restore harmony into disharmony, and to salvage and re-instal the fallen image of the Muse once again on a lofty pedestal for us to worship today.

Born on the auspicious Gokulashtami day of 1860, Vishnu Narain Bhatkhande was destined to play a most significant role in the renaissance of Hindustani classical music. In the words of a cultured royal patron of music who was a contemporary and a great admirer of Panditji, "When Bhatkhande resolved to translate his love for Hindustani Music into a continued, unwearied day-to-day programme of service, he had

to confront social, intellectual, and finally, professional prejudices. These took shape as positive obstacles, definite active resistance. He had to face all this very early in life, even as a student seeking no more than information and enlightenment, and later on, as a crusader in the cause of classical music".

A lesser man, or a man inspired by a lesser passion for music would have fled from the field defeated and crushed by the endless obstacles in his path. But Bhatkhande's was really a dedicated life, inspired by a single, undivided aim. In the words of the late D.P. Mukerji :- "If the renaissance of classical music in the North is due to one man than to any other, it was due to Bhatkhande."

Born into a cultured, though not well-to-do, Maharashtrian family in Balukeshwar, Bombay, Gajanan (as he was called in his childhood) was gifted with rare musical talent, intense love for the art, a remarkably shrewd brain, indefatigable powers of industry, an impressive personality, and most winning manners. Equipped with so many great qualities, it is no wonder that he finally succeeded in the gigantic tasks of reawakening, "the sense of history and pride among people who had slept over this vital aspect of Indian culture", of reconciling the theory and practice of music, and of collecting and putting at the disposal of music lovers, thousands of traditional compositions hitherto closely locked up by the professionals.

Bhatkhande's life and work fall into four clear stages. The first stage consisted of his own preparation period, his musical training, and his important association with Gayan Uttejak Mandal of Bombay. His earliest musical education was imparted to him by his pious mother who could beautifully sing passages from the works of great saints and devotees. He had inherited a sweet voice from his mother, and a keen musical ear from his father who could play on the Qanoon. He learnt the flute, Sitar and vocal music from some very eminent gurus like Jairajgir, Raojibua Belbagkar, Ali Husain Khan, Vilayat Hussain Khan and others. Along with his academic studies, he devoted nearly 15 years to the study of all the available ancient music-treatises in Sanskrit, Telugu, Bengali, Gujarati, Urdu, German, Greek and English with the

help of scholars and interpreters. After taking his B.A. and LL. B. degrees, Vishnu Narain joined the Karachi High Court and became a very successful lawyer. But his highly successful legal career was only a brief interlude in the life of this Sangeet-Bhakta who was destined for work of a nobler kind. With the death of his young wife and only daughter, he decided to give up Law and dedicate his entire life to the cause of Music. He had earned just enough to keep his body and soul together; and that was all that this devotee needed for the simple life of ceaseless service for music that he had chalked out for himself.

The next stage in Bhatkhande's life was a period of extensive touring for the purpose of deep musical research, study, and discussions with the ustadts and pandits all over the country. He toured the entire length and breadth of the country from Kashmir to Rameshwaram, and from Surat and Broach to Calcutta and Puri. He visited all the important music libraries, avidly going through ancient Granthas, and meeting every living authority on music then. His bulky private diary running into hundreds of pages gives us glimpses into the pattern of frugal living and high thinking that he had set for himself. For instance, it was one of his self imposed rules that he would devote every day of his tour entirely for study in music libraries, and never waste a single day for amusements like sight seeing or social engagements. By his infinite patience, presuasive ways, and utter sincerity of purpose, Bhatkhande was gradually able to break down the opposition and suspicion of some of the great ustadts of the day. Those who scorned him for "looting the great treasures of Ustads," stayed to become his associates, teachers, and friends. Among the many who helped him immensely were great Ustads like Mohammad Ali Khan, Asgar Ali Khan and Ahmed Ali Khan of Jaipur; they gave him more than 300 precious compositions of the Manarang Gharana.

Then followed a period of prolific publications. After pondering deeply over the voluminous materials he had collected during his exhaustive study-cum-research tours, Panditji sifted the valuable materials and set about the magnanimous work of publishing all this laboriously collected material in a

large number of volumes in Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi and English such as; *Abhinavaragamanjari*, *Abhinavatalamanjari*, *Lakshya Sangeetam*, the *Hindustani Sangeet Paddhati*, the Kramik series in 6 volumes, the *Swara-malika* and *Geet malika* series, *Grantha sangeetam*, *Bhavi Sangeetam*, *A Short Historical Survey of Music*, *Philosophy of Music*, and so on. Thus he has unstintingly spread out before the music loving public his entire musical wealth. As he himself wrote :- "My sole object has been to place before my educated, music-loving brothers and sisters, the present condition of the Art". The fact that he published all his works under his pen-names "Vishnu Sharma" or "Chaturpandit" shows his utter indifference to fame. Besides hundreds of traditional Dhrupads, Dhamars, Khayals, Sadras, Taraanas, Chaturangs, Thumris, etc. that he has published with notations in his Kramik series, he has also composed and included in this series, scores of his own compositions, mostly Khayals and Lakshangeets (nearly 250 or so) under his pseudonym "Chatura". He also published several ancient music-granthas whose manuscripts he had salvaged during his country-wide tours.

Although Bhatkhande shunned fame, it came to him unsought. His fame spread. The cultured rulers of various states like Baroda, Gwalior, Rampur, Dharampur, Akbarpur etc., became his staunch supporters and admirers. They sent students to study music at his feet. Under his inspiration, and direction, music colleges sprang up in various places like Baroda, Gwalior, Lucknow, Bombay, Nagpur and so on. Besides these institutions which Panditji used to visit and guide till the end of his life, there were several others which uniformly followed his system of teaching, syllabus, textbooks and notations. There are critics galore who "pooh pooh" at the idea of learning music in music colleges. But if you ask these critics how else interest in classical music can be awokened widely, they have no alternative constructive suggestions to offer. It is not possible for every music-student or music-lover to go and stay with a guru for years and years trying to squeeze out some "ilm" out of him by propitiating him with services. A well-known music connoisseur who is no more with us today, wrote : "Bhatkhande has done perhaps most

for the reawakening of interest in Indian music and its proper development through its organisation in educational institutions throughout Northern India. In the provinces where he started music colleges, his efforts have borne a rich harvest by training up batches of accomplished music teachers who have spread far and wide the gospel of this great and noble heritage of our country".

Rightly called the "Father of Music Conferences", Pandit Bhatkhande was the life and soul of five consecutive All India Music Conferences held in Baroda, Delhi, Lucknow (twice) and Varanasi. These conferences were not merely entertaining but were highly educative as well, since they provided a common platform for musicians and musicologists from all over the North and South to listen to one another, to discuss and come to an agreement on disputed aspects of music. These conferences achieved a lot for Hindustani classical music and paved the way for the Chaturpandit's favourite dream. "The mighty mansion of music," he wrote, "should become accessible to all—rich and poor, high and low, girls and boys —irrespective of age, and social status." Today All India Music Conferences are the order of the day not only in big cities, but in smaller towns as well.

Bhatkhande's ceaseless efforts for music continued till he became helplessly bed-ridden in 1933 with a tragic attack of paralysis and thigh fracture. It is a strange coincidence that this great "Sangeeta-Bhakta" who came into this world on the auspicious day of Lord Krishna's birth, shook off his mortal coils on an equally auspicious Ganesh Chaturthi day (1936). The wealth that he earned in his life-time of service to music is the eternal gratitude of music-lovers. Year after year, during Ganesh Chaturthi week, lovers of Hindustani music get together in numerous places all over Maharashtra and North India to pay grateful homage to this unforgettable architect and great law giver of modern Hindustani music.

Chapter X

Ustad Alauddin Khan—“Baba”

Ustad Alauddin Khan, or “Baba” as he is affectionately known in the world of music, had become a legend in his own life-time, and the aura of his personality was such that “Madina Bhawan” his humble dwelling in Maihar, a dusty little town in Madhya Pradesh, had become a pilgrimage spot for musicians and music-lovers ever since he started living there. From the tender age of seven, until his death on September, 6, 1972-at the ripe old age of 110, he had remained a dedicated and impassioned devotee of the Muse of Music and of the Goddess Sharada at whose shrines he worshipped until age and severe illness chained down his physical body. Although his “centenary” was celebrated on a grand scale in Madhya Pradesh on the auspicious Durga Ashtami Day October 6, 1962, there are different opinions about his accurate age. But, as Pandit Ravi Shankar rightly remarked : “What does it matter ? What he has accomplished in his life time, others would not do, even if they had 300 years to live !” Baba’s entire life had been inspired by one passion, and consecrated to the sole pursuit of the divine art of music. More than 40 years of his life were devoted to the study of, and training in, various branches of vocal and instrumental music, and the rest entirely dedicated to the selfless service and dissemination of his excellent art. And yet, this great devotee of music used to say : “Although I

have devoted almost a century to the pursuit of music, I am no authority. I am only a student of the art, and a devotee of mother Sharada."

Baba's utter indifference to material possessions and honours, his life-long and passionate devotion to music and goddess Sharada, his selflessness and humility, his childlike simplicity and honesty, his magnanimity as a teacher, his reverence for his gurus—all these qualities mark him out as an outstanding artiste of this century. He led a noble life of austerity, charity, and simplicity, and his entire life was soaked in music. In this jet-age of material acquisitiveness and ambition, the simple sage-like personality of Baba stands out like a beautiful anachronism. Future generations will look upon Ustad Alauddin Khan with as much awe and reverence as we do upon the personalities of Tansen or Baiju Bawra.

Recalling his first meeting with the Ustad in 1934, Ravi Shankar writes : "In contrast to the other musicians who were wearing colourful costumes, turbans and jewels, and were bedecked with medals, Baba looked very plain and ordinary, but he had qualities that far outshone the gaudiness of his colleagues. He seemed to shine with a fire that came from within him. I found myself completely overwhelmed by everything about him." Baba's life was a shining example of a true Sangeet-Bhakta who worshipped God through his music. He used to say : "When I play, my mind forgets all the realities of the external world, and is turned inward right into my innermost self where God dwells. I play for him only. One life-time is not enough to master this unlimited art. Musical notes must be so pure and perfect that they should melt your heart and make the tears flow. In spite of a century devoted to the pursuit of music, I have been able to touch such perfect notes only twice or thrice, in my life. At such moments, I have experienced a state of rare mental bliss, and sensed a pink brilliance before my mental eyes". Although his only son Ali Akbar may have surpassed him in artistic excellence, it is only his daughter Annapoorna who seems to have imbibed his religious fervour about music. Baba once said : "I have taught Annapoorna my entire Dhrupad style; and

yet, she has never used her art as a profession for earning money. She plays on the Surbahar every morning as a medium of worship. She is a true devotee of music."

Once when Baba gave an inspired Sarod-recital in the Aurobindo Ashram (Pondicherry) Sri Aurobindo was so deeply moved that he remarked : "Alauddin Khan has truly achieved God through the medium of his music."

Ustad Alauddin Khan was never interested in wealth, fame, or honours. Titles like "Aftab-e-Hind" (by the Tansen Sangeet Samiti) "Sangeetacharya" (by the Bhatkhande Music College) "Desikothama" (by Shantaniketan) "Sangeet-Nayak" (by the Maihar-ruler) the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1954, the Presidential award from the Government of India, and Padma Vibhushan were some of the important honours showered on him by the grateful motherland. But Baba attached little value to these titles. Unruffled and unaffected by all these, he went on steadfastly pursuing his art like a true Yogi and passing it on to his deserving and persevering few pupils. Even though his fame spread far out of this country, and he had performed in the glittering cities of the West, he continued to live a life of austere simplicity in his "Temple of Music" in obscure Maihar till his end. The story of his life sounds stranger than fiction.

Born in village Shivapur in Tripura "Alam" (his pet-name in the family) was one of the seven children in a fairly well-to-do, family of farmers. Living in a predominantly Hindu village, and belonging to a family converted to Islam only two or three generations back, it is no wonder that Alam's life became a shining example of the beautiful fusion of two rich cultures, Hinduism and Islam. His family-tree has been traced back to one Dinanath Dev Sharma. His father Sadhu Khan was an ardent music lover who walked many miles each day to listen to the great musicians who gathered in the Court of Tripura. The ruler was a great patron of music; and the court was adorned by many great artistes like Kasim Ali Khan (the great Rabab and Sursingar player), Jadu Bhatt (the famed musician), Dilruba-artist Haidar Khan, Mridang-player Keshav Babu and others. Sadhu Khan had learnt Sitar from Kasim Ali. Alam's elder brother Aftabuddin had become a Tabla-

expert under the training of Shri Ram Kerai. From his father, Alam inherited his passion for music and his devotion to goddess Kali. Aftabuddin had become proficient on a number of musical instruments. Combined with his extraordinary zeal for music, Alam had an intense aversion to school and studies. He began to play truant from school in order to listen to way-side singers who frequented the Shiva-temple, and to sneak into the little music room in his house in order to try to handle the various instruments. Harsundari Devi (Alam's mother) was fed up of her husband's absorption in music and had hoped that Alam would take his school and study seriously. The boy's lack of interest in study infuriated her, and there was constant friction between the mother and the son. She often punished him because music as a profession was looked down upon in those days. Later on, at the tender age of eight, unable to bear these punishments any longer, Alam ran away from home and joined a party of travelling musicians. Wandering with this group, he learnt to play on a number of instruments like Dhol, Tabla, Pakhawaj, Shahnai, Coronet, Clarionet and Trumpet.

Alauddin's next recollections were of weeks of hopeless wandering and starvation in Dacca and Calcutta, where his little bundle of belongings was stolen from him. In this hour of sorrow, he found a great and generous guru in (Gopal-chandra Bhattacharya) Nulo Gopal—a famous musician in the court of Raja Yatindra Mohan Tagore. Nulo Gopal was impressed by the boy's zeal, but accepted him as a disciple only when he agreed to undergo swarsadhana for 12 years uninterruptedly. The Guru renamed him Manmohan Day and commenced his thorough training. In spite of starvation and poverty, Manmohan was very happy because he could not have got a more sincere guru. In his own words : "All my physical sufferings did not perturb me from my final aim to learn music." It was nearly three years later that Nulo Gopal learnt how the boy had been keeping himself alive by eating just one meal per day from the charitable free kitchen at the Neemtala Ghat Street, and drinking "free" Ganges water, and sleeping wherever he could—even in shop-verandas and road-sides ! The Guru at once arranged for his

free boarding and lodging in Sri Yatindra Mohan Tagore's own residence. It is said that Nulo Gopal taught him thousands of paltas (note-combinations and permutations) as part of his voice-training and also taught him to play well on Tabla and Mridang.

Seven years later, Alam's family traced him out and persuaded the guru to send him home for a few days only. Unwillingly he was taken home where, his family tricked him into a marriage with an eight-year-old girl, *Madan Manjari*, hoping that the little bride would succeed in keeping him tied down to the house.

On the same night, however, the young bridegroom made a little bundle of the cash and jewellery he had received at the marriage and quietly disappeared. Travelling by steamer and train, he at last reached Calcutta and eagerly rushed to his guru's residence only to be given the shocking news of Nulo Gopal's sudden illness and death. So great was the shock, and so deep was his attachment to his guru, that Alauddin swore to bury vocal music with his guru.

Alauddin's next benefactor was Habu Dutt (or Amritlal Dutt) a cousin brother of Swami Vivekananda who, it is said, was a good Dhrupad singer as well as Pakhawajiya. Habu Dutt could play beautifully on a number of instruments such as Clarionet, Sitar, etc. Alauddin first started to learn Violin from him. Because of the thorough grounding he had received under Nulo Gopal, Alauddin picked up *gats* in no time, and Habu Dutt foretold "a very bright future" for him. Besides learning to play on the Veena, Esraj, Clarionet, Shahnai, etc., Alauddin was also able to learn valuable lessons in conducting orchestras for which Habu Dutt had already earned a high reputation. This training was most helpful to Alauddin when later on, he organised the famous Maihar Band, the first of its kind in India.

In order to help him financially, Habu Dutt got him an appointment in the Minerva Theatre of Girish Chandra Ghosh who rechristened him as Prasanna Kumar Biswas. During this period, Alauddin picked up staff-notations and some English music from one Mr and Mrs Lobo; he learnt Shahnai from Ustad Hazari, and Violin from Mrs Lobo. For

three years, he worked in the Minerva Theatre-unaffected by the corrupt atmosphere of the place, and concentrating on his music only.

Three years later, Alauddin (now Prasanna Kumar) went to Muktagacha (in Meimen Singh District) where musicians from far and near gathered during Durga Pooja celebrations. In Alauddin's own words: "I was overconfident about my musical attainments because I could play quite well on many instruments. So, it was with a swollen head that I approached the respected Raja Jagat Kishore Acharya in his Court. But the masterly Sarod-recital of Ustad Ahmad Ali Khan moved me to tears, and washed away all my pride : I was so deeply moved that I simply fell at his feet begging him to accept me as his pupil and promising to be his most humble domestic servant." The young man refused to get up until Raja Jagat Kishore persuaded Ahmad Ali to accept the gifted boy as a pupil. Although Alauddin slaved for him and did the most menial jobs to please him, Ahmad Ali was too mean an Ustad to impart his jealously-guarded art to anyone. However, by attentive listening, the intelligent pupil gradually picked up most of the Ustad's closely-concealed art. One day the Ustad overheard Alauddin copying his style so perfectly that he got very annoyed. Apprehending that the pupil might soon excel him, Ahmad Ali slyly packed him off, saying that he should now be on his own.

After another period of despondent wanderings, Alauddin gravitated towards Rampur the most important seat of Hindustani music then. The court of H. H. Nawab Bahadur Hamid Ali Khan, the famous patron and lover of music, was adorned by hundreds of musical virtuosi, headed by the great Beenkar Wazir Khan—a descendant of Miyan Tansen himself. Denied entry into the very gates of this great Beenkar's residence, the desperate young Alauddin nearly ended his life with two tolas of opium, but, destiny intervened in time through the kindly person of the magnanimous Nawab Saheb. Filled with pity for the luckless boy in rags, and impressed by his burning zeal and rare talent, the Nawab took him under his cover, rescued him from penury and starvation, provided him with suitable lodgings, and asked Wazir Khan to accept



NAWAB WAJID ALI SHAH
(1823-1887)

USTAD KHURSHED ALI KHAN
(1845-1950)





CHATURPANDIT VISHNU NARAIN BHATKHANDE
(1860-1936)



USTAD ALAUDDIN KHAN (1862-1972)
GIVING MUSIC TRAINING TO PT. RAVI SHANKAR (LEFT)
AND USTAD ALI AKBAR KHAN (RIGHT)



PANDIT VISHNU DIGAMBAR PALUSKAR
(1872-1931)

Alauddin as his disciple. During the first two years, Wazir Khan took absolutely no interest in the eager and devout pupil who slaved for the Ustad day in and day out. Anyway, Alauddin "revelled in the musical atmosphere of the Rampur Darbar, felt completely intoxicated with the ecstasy of meeting so many great musicians," and amassed musical wealth from various Ustads. He learnt Dhrupads from Raza Hussain Khan, Sitar *Gat todas* from Karim Khan, Sarod from Mohammad Hussain Khan and so on. All these Ustads became quite fond of him, and many of them used to gather in Alauddin's neatly-kept rooms. By listening to their performances and musical discussions, his own storehouse of knowledge became richer than ever.

Two years later, Ustad Wazir Khan's interest in him was suddenly awakened, when the real story of his sacrifices and sufferings in the pursuit of music reached the guru's ears. From then, the Ustad took his pupil to his heart. In five or six years of intensive training (of 12 hours per day), Wazir Khan moulded him into a rare and polished artist, adept in several instruments like the Rabab, Sursingar, Surbahar, Been and Sarod, and launched him into the world of music with all his blessings.

In 1918, the Maharaja of Maihar State became his devoted disciple. Besides giving training to the Maharaja, Alauddin Khan devoted several hours a day to a group of orphan-boys whom he organised into the famous Maihar Band the first of its kind in India. On Alauddin's request, the Maharaja housed, clothed, and fed these orphans. This excellent Band shot into fame when a 10 minutes' item was allotted to it in the All India Music Conference organised by Pandit V. N. Bhatkhande in Lucknow in 1924. The item was so highly appreciated that repeated shouts of "encore" encouraged the young artistes to go on playing for full 3 hours, at the end of which they were rewarded with medals. Ustad Alauddin Khan included not only traditional instruments, but enriched the Maihar Band by introducing into it his own new innovations like the Nal Tarang (made out of steel pipes of old guns and rifles), and "Chandratarang."

Madina Bhavan became a real temple of music, and many students began to live there as the Ustad's disciples in the good old Gurukula-style. A unique principle of his was that he never accepted any fees or gifts from his disciples. Timir Baran was one of his first pupils.

Baba's fame spread far and wide. His deserted bride who had faithfully waited for him all these years, was brought to him. For the first time, he had a settled, peaceful householder's life, a life that enriched and beautified all those who came into contact with it.

Soon, Uday Shankar persuaded Baba to join his troupe. Always fond of travelling, he enjoyed being a member of Uday Shankar's troupe, because they travelled extensively in India and abroad, and performed all over Europe, U. K', Cairo, Palestine, Turkey, Rumania, and so on. Baba has written : "The audiences in Vienna, Paris, Prague, Budapest, etc., are intense music lovers. The accountics in the halls were excellent, and the audiences perfectly disciplined. The perfect silence in the hall, and the subdued beam of light focussed on me during those performances made me forget all sense of place and time. I used to feel that I was seated in some Himalayan cave all by myself playing *raga-ragini*s to please the Gods. The deafening applause at the end of each item used to fill me with more and more enthusiasm. I used to feel sure that a day will come when the whole world will listen to, and admire, our traditional music. Some of the European artistes used to tell me how "Bhimpalasi" moved them into a lachrymose mood, while "Bhairavi" lifted them into a devotional mood and so on."

The atmosphere of the Uday Shankar Culture Centre (Almora) where there were no religious barriers, and where the arts of music and dance were beautifully blended with religion, was very much to Baba's liking.

On his return from Almora, Baba once again resumed his "Ashram" life in Maihar. Among his many disciples were, of course his only son Ali Akbar, his daughter Annapoorna and later on, Ravi Shankar. There were times when all three used to practice as a trio (Sarod, Surbahar, and Sitar respec-

tively) under Baba's strict supervision. Once he wrote : "Seeing and hearing these three playing together, I used to experience Paramananda (the ultimate Bliss), and I used to pray to God—oh God! please may this music go on for ever."

The Ustad's touch really had something magical about it. Whoever underwent his long, arduous, and disciplined training has emerged as one of the names to conjure with in Hindustani Music today. Besides Ali Akbar, Annapoorna and Ravi Shankar, the other outstanding pupils of Baba make an impressive list—Timir Baran (Sarod), Pannalal Ghosh (Fute), Nikhil Banerji (Sitar), Sharan Rani, Bahadur Khan, Jyotin Bhattacharya and Ashish (Ali Akbar's son) all Sarod, Indranil Bhattacharya (Sitar) and others. But, becoming a disciple of Ustad Alauddin Khan was no easy task. It meant renouncing all material comforts and living a life dedicated to music-exercises, training and practice, altogether nearly 16 hours per day, for years and years with total concentration, little sleep, and no diversions! At the very outset, Baba would give a frank warning :—

"Classical music, when finally acquired, is a two-way blessing, but it takes a hard long time to master. If you have the courage to go through the arduous, long training, stay with me. Otherwise, go back right now."

No wonder that most of the young aspirants ran away after the first week or so, scared by Baba's legendary temper, strict discipline, and exacting standards. Normally so meek, gentle, and God-fearing, Baba would turn into a fierce figure of fury if he found any student lagging behind in music practice, or committing the musical blasphemy of producing "besuras."

When one is told how he never spared the rod even for his beloved son Ali Akbar, nor relented in the case of his precious daughter or son in law, one can gauge the depths of his utter sincerity as a guru. Never having shunned any physical or mental discipline himself in the pursuit of music, Baba unhesitatingly imposed it on his disciples too. Those who withstood the arduous years of training under him, emerged years later, as artistes of the highest stature. Pdt. Ravi Shankar nostalgically recalls those years with Baba :

"There was a period of several years when the three of us—Ali Akbar, Annapoorna, and myself sat with Baba, and learnt together from him. He would start to teach us, singing such serious and beautiful ragas, and sometimes he would just go on teaching us for 3 or 4 hours and lose all perception of the passage of time. Many times we cried because of the intense beauty of the music, and no one would think of disturbing the spell."

Baba always encouraged young talented artistes by allowing them to accompany him. But one had samples of his puckish sense of humour when his own equals in seniority were pitched against him as accompanists. One of the first concerts in which Pt. Kanthe Maharaj accompanied Ustad Alauddin Khan was in All India Radio Lucknow. It was one of his last Rabab-recitals that I heard. While the "rhythmic duels" between the two were at their height, Baba stopped for a few seconds and spoke into the mike : "The bull of Banaras and the donkey of Maihar make a good pair, eh ?" The audience burst into a roar of laughter.

Baba's contributions to instrumental music are amazingly varied. A master of many instruments, he was perhaps the last of the Rababiyas. We shall not see another instrumentalist as versatile as Baba. He was a veritable treasure-house of Dhrupads, Dhamars, Horis, and musical knowledge.

He created and popularised a large number of ragas like Madan Manjari, Sursati, Hemant, Hem-Bihag, Manjh Khamaj Prabhakali, Kaunshi-Bhairav, Hemant Bhairav, etc., and also composed many beautiful Lakshan Geets and devotional khayals in traditional ragas like Yaman, Todi, Bhairavi, Bilawal, and Darbari-Todi.

He enriched the Sarod-baj by adding to it the distilled essence of several beautiful vocal and instrumental styles—all of which he had mastered during his long years of struggle as a student.

He played not only *Maseetkhani* and *Razakhani* gats but also *Wazirkhani* which was typical of the *Seniya gharana*.

Commenting on the haste with which today's music students try short-cuts to learn music quickly, Baba once

said : Most of today's vocalists do not have the inclination or patience to perfect Swara-Sadhana. They use a number of instruments in an attempt to cover up their defects in swara and laya. I have heard the best khayal-singers of old like Haddoo Hassu, Nathoo, Ali-Fatoo, Alladiya, Faiyaz and Mushtaq Hussain Khans. In today's khayal singing, one rarely gets even glimpses of the original, real Khayal-Gayaki."

Out of all the styles he had heard and mastered, Ustad Alauddin Khan evolved his own style and made it something unique, rich, and individual. His message to all musicians was : "Let me emphasise that there is no particular community in music. Music has one personality and one religion, and all votaries of "nada" are a class by themselves. As devotees of Nada Brahma, all musicians should try to revive the ancient glory of Indian music." His own guru Ustad Wazir Khan who had earlier wasted some precious years before teaching him, ended up by prophesying : "Alauddin's name will shine as long as the sun and moon shine over this earth."

Baba really seems to belong to that bygone era when Rishis and saints used to attain God (Nada Brahma) through the pathway of Nada (music).

About Ustad Alauddin Khan one can say that he really lived to fulfil his own aim in life : Ek hi Sadhe Sab Sadhe.

All his life was devoted to mastering the art of music and who has served it better?

Chapter XI

Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar

Music was one of the casualties of foreign rule in our country. In the lethargic age which preceded our political struggle, this fine art fell from its high pedestal into low, illiterate society, and lay there uncared for, and looked down upon. It were the two Vishnus, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar who salvaged our music which had been submerged for years under the cold waves of public apathy and alien contempt.

Early in this century, along with the freedom revolution, there began an awakening of interest in our fine arts too. The two individuals responsible for this awakening were the two Vishnus who dedicated their lives to this great cause. But for the life-long efforts of Vishnu Digambar and Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, our music would still have remained an inaccessible art imprisoned in the un-relenting clutches of a few narrow-minded and illiterate professionals. Thanks to these two reformers, however, today Hindustani classical music is no longer confined to an esoteric circle, but is an art within the reach of every aspiring home. To them goes the credit and thanks for the rehabilitation and restoration of music to a highly respected and admired position. No wonder, therefore, that musicians of many Gharanas sink their mutual differences at least to pay homage to these two savants every year. Pt Digambar's Punya-Thithi is observed and celebrated in August, and Pt Bhatkhande's in September.

Vishnu Digambar's father, Pdt. Digambar Gopal Paluskar, was a well-known *Keertankar* and a favourite of the Raja Dajisahib of Kurundwad (14 miles south of Miraj). Originally the Paluskar family-name was "Gadgil", but as they hailed from the village Palus, they came to be known as the "Paluskar" family. Born in Kurundwad on 18th August (Raksha-Bandhan day) in 1872, Vishnu was brought up in the luxurious palace-atmosphere because he was a close friend and playmate of the Raja's son, Srimant Nanasaheb. They were educated together and their sacred thread-ceremonies were celebrated together. Vishnu and his elder brother Gopal often used to accompany their father during his Keertans, with the Jhanjh and Manjeera. Even as a boy, Vishnu became a favourite with everyone because of his good looks, sweet voice, and melodious Bhajans. Since he was a very intelligent boy, his teachers were sure that he would one day become a high Government official. But fate intervened and gave an unexpected twist to his career. During the annual festivities and fireworks in the Dattatreya temple, a piece exploded over his face and damaged his eyes. The Raja Saheb got the best doctors for his treatment. Although the facial injuries were cured marvellously, the boy's eyesight was damaged for ever. The doctor (Trimbakrao) suggested that the boy should be trained in music. Accordingly, the Raja of Kurundwad sent him to Miraj and put him under the training of Pdt. Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjikar, the founder of Khayal music in Maharashtra, who had received his training under great masters like Devjibuwa (disciple of the Dhrupadiya Chintamani Misra), Vasudeobuwa Joshi (disciple of the famed Hassu Khan of Gwalior) and Mohammad Khan (son of Hassu Khan). For years, Vishnu underwent arduous training in the old-fashioned Gurukula style, doing all the domestic chores in the guru's home, washing clothes and utensils, cutting up firewood, filling pots of water, sweeping and cleaning floors, cooking etc. After nine years of rigorous musical training in Miraj, at last Pdt. Balakrishnabuwa permitted Vishnu to set out on his own in 1816 to give solo recitals. At the time he ventured into the field of music, there was a stigma attached to the profession of music, and

musicians were looked down upon in society. He felt deeply pained at the contemptuous treatment meted out to music and its devotees. This sparked off his keen ambition to secure for musicians as high a status in society as that enjoyed by any other profession. And as we all know, he succeeded in this noble mission of his, as a result of his life-long efforts. At 25, his voice was in excellent form and his recital in the Ram-mandir of Baroda was acclaimed by all; his fame spread. Rani Jamnabai who had adopted Maharaja Sayajirao as her son invited Vishnu into her palace for recitals. She liked his music so much that she detained him in Baroda for 4 months. Great artistes like Khan Saheb Nasir Khan (percussion maestro of the darbar) and Ghulab Singh (the famous Tabla maestro) became his admirers. In his music they detected the grand style of Ustad Mohammad Khan (son of Hassu Khan, and brother of Rahmat Khan). The Rani greatly wished to engage Vishnu as a Darbari-gayak at Rs 400 per month, but Vishnu declined, as he wanted to tour various parts of the country, learn different styles and enrich his own repertoire.

Sri B.R.Deodhar recounts a mystical experience of his Guruji. It is said that once Pdt. Vishnu Digambar met a great "Bairagi" (ascetic-renouncer) and that this meeting left a deep influence on Digambar. Until then, he had been full of over-confidence about his music and his behaviour tended to be a bit "arrogant". After hearing the Bairagi's divinely-inspired and melodious music in the solitude of the Girnar mountains, Vishnu felt extremely humble, and fell at his feet begging for his forgiveness. The Sadhu blessed him and advised him— "Your chosen path is very noble. But you must shed all your arrogance and learn the virtue of humility. Only then can you succeed in your noble mission. Start your work in the Punjab".

From there Pdt. Vishnu Digambar went on a long tour of various places like Kathiawad, Gwalior, Aligarh, Mathura, Jullundur, Amritsar, Lahore, Kashmir, Rawalpindi, Bharatpur and so on. In Mathura he stayed on for some months in order to study the theoretical aspect of music in the library, to master Hindi and Brajbhasha, and to think out a notation-system. After touring the Punjab, he started his very first

Gandharwa Mahavidyalaya in Lahore in the year 1901. The inaugural function was presided over by Justice P.C.Chatterji, and the palatial Haveli of Raja Ramsingh was hired on rent at Rs 13 per month ! Although no students joined in the beginning, gradually more and more students came in, and the staff consisted of teachers trained free of charge by Pdt. Digambar himself. Among the staff were Keshavrao Datar, Govindrao Apte, Vishnu A. Kashalkar, Keshavrao Kale, Yashwantrao, Mugholkar and others. From 1904 Digambar began to actively co-operate in the Swadeshi Movement by singing patriotic songs along with his groups of students, and quietening the most noisy throngs through the magic of his grand voice which needed no microphone. His rendering of the prayer-song "Raghupathi Raghava Rajaram" was one of Gandhiji's favourites. Important citizens of Lahore like Lala Lajpatrai, and Swami Sraddhananda, and other social leaders became his admirers and friends. By his own personality and his clean and noble living, he won for himself as well as for his profession, a respected place in the highest society. With his impressive personality, sweet and powerful voice, and fine training, he was splendidly equipped for the mission of promoting love and respect for the art of Music all over the North. Once, a critic tried to tease him by asking: "Panditji, how many Tansens have you produced ?". With his ready wit, he cleverly retorted that he had trained a very large number of "Kaansens" (connoisseurs of Music) all over the country.

The Mahavidyalaya in Lahore had been started in the very teeth of opposition, and there was a constant shortage of funds, but Pdt. Digambar and his brave band of co-workers pulled on somehow. At one stage, they were so bankrupt that they apprehended that the school might have to be closed down, but at that critical hour came a windfall in the form of an invitation from the Maharaja of Kashmir. Vishnu Digambar accepted the offer gladly. By his successful recitals in Kashmir, he earned enough money and the life-long patronage of the Raja, so that thereafter, he was not only able to run the school on a stable basis but also to maintain and support a large number of poor but talented students in his school.

Being a strict disciplinarian as well as of a very charitable disposition, he commanded great respect and affection. In an atmosphere of mutual concord and under a systematic routine, the students were trained not only in vocal and instrumental music, but they were also taught to repair musical instruments, and run their own printing press and journal. Well aware of the importance of proper publicity, Vishnu Digambar saw to it that the school's work and activities were brought before the public eye from time to time through journals and newspapers. What with his own regular practice, the conscientious lessons to students and the extensive tours he undertook along with his groups of students, his was indeed a very busy life. The example of his own pure life and the unsullied atmosphere of the school gradually broke down all the existing prejudices against music, and attracted larger and larger numbers of boys and girls from respected families. Branches of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya spread into various other towns like Bombay, Poona and Allahabad, and the strength swelled. Though the songs were taught by rote, they were also published with notations in the School-Journals. Among the many Journals and books published in their own printing press were "Sangeeta Amritapravaaha" (costing 2 annas per issue !), "Sangeeta-Baala-Prasad" in 3 volumes, "Sangeeta Baalabodha", "Raga Pravesa" and so on. Pdt. Digambar himself used to teach in the classes until he trained a large number of eminent disciples like Narayan Moreswar Khare (who later on, stayed with Mahatma Gandhi in Sabarmati), Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Narayanrao and Shankarrao Vyas, V.A. Kashalkar, Pdt. Omkarnath Thakur, Wamanrao Thakar, Wamanrao Padhye, Venkatesh Modak, Keshavrao Kale and Datar, Rambhau Ashtekar, Govindrao Apte, Yashwantrao, B. R. Deodhar and so many others. His own son Dattatreya Vishnu Paluskar outshone them all, flashed like a meteor in the musical firmament but alas ! was snatched away by the cruel hands of death at the youthful age of 34 ! Pdt. Vishnu Digambar's personal life was full of tragedy. In 1882, he had been married to Vithabai, the sister of Balwantrao (the postmaster of Kurundwad), and 12 children were born to them; but tragically 11 of them died in their infancy, while Datt-

reya (or Bapurao as he was fondly called), the 12th son who lived long enough to become an excellent and most popular classical musician was snatched away in the prime of his life and at the peak of his musical career by a rare virus infection of the brain which could not be cured in spite of the best and most prompt medical attention. But D.V.Paluskar's popularity has not waned even after the passage of so many years (he was born on 18/5/1921, and he died in 1955) as is evident from the large number of his gramophone records that adorn every music library. The AIR Archives contain many good tapes of this melodious musician.

Perhaps it was the tragic loss of 11 children that made Pdt. Digambar so intensely religious-minded, and turned his attention to Ramayan Keertan and so on. From classical music, his interest seems to have shifted to devotional and patriotic songs. His Schools contributed not a little towards the popularisation of music all over the country. Instead of cringing for fiftful patronage of a few interested royal patrons, Digambar turned towards the masses for support and appreciation. He undertook musical tours from time to time and sang along with his students too in public halls. These concerts were accessible to rich and poor alike through moderate tickets. Among the many factors that helped him to captivate huge audiences and acquire admirers were his melodious and powerful voice, his dignified personality (with the long loose robes, and flowing beard, like a seer) and his capacity to cater to every type of audience. He could sing before an audience of thousands without the aid of any microphone ! Moreover, he could serve highbrow stuff for real connoisseurs, national songs for the patriotic-minded, devotional music for the pious, Abhangs for the people of Pandharpur and Maand-renderings for the Marwaris ! His admirers and disciples have recorded for us many instances where scoffers of Panditji's work were put to shame on witnessing the spell which his music cast over mammoth audiences, or instances where the highest authorities of a State intervened to protect his person from jealous rivals who sneakingly tried to harm him. A professional musician moving on terms of social equality with respected national leaders and social leaders, and with exalted

persons of other "respected" professions was indeed a rare sight in those days. That was Pdt. Digambar's great ambition and achievement. Through his untiring efforts, he gradually managed to secure a place for our music in the highest and most snobbish parties of fashionable Lahore. His own disciplined and clean personal life was a great inspiration to all those who came into contact with him. In his Gandharva Vidyalayas he stressed the importance of prayers, strict self-discipline, and clean living. He selected the Padas of Meera, Nanak, Tulsidas, Surdas and other saint-poets and set them in appropriate ragas and talas to be sung as classical songs.

His Gandharva Maha-Vidyalaya in Bombay which was inaugurated by His Holiness Sri Jagatguru Shankaracharya, attracted students from all castes and creeds in the cosmopolitan city. He founded the Ramnam Adhar Asram in Nasik. Along with his pupils and co-workers he toured all over this country and also visited Burma, giving performances and popularising Indian music. A great patriot and an impassioned singer, he became one of the favourite Bhajan-singers of Mahatma Gandhi. So successfully did he utilize his art for inspiring patriotism that no political meeting or Congress session in Lahore, Ahmedabad etc. was complete without his powerful music. "*Raghupati Raghava Rajaram*", "*Vande Maataram*" "*Jaya Jagadisha Hare*", "*Rachaa Prabhu Toone*" have all come to be associated specially with Pdt. Vishnu Digambar. His spirited defiance of the unreasonable ban on "*Vande Maataram*" at the Cocanada Congress was given deserved praise and publicity in all the national newspapers. His emotional rendering of "*Raghupati Raghava Rajaram*" after his musical discourses got such a hold over people's hearts that during his Hyderabad trip, it is said that people of all religions joined him in singing it !

Towards the last phase of his life, Digambar became more and more spiritual-minded, a real Bhakta of Sri Rama, spending long hours in solitude, praying and singing. With his handsome face, and the serene and pious expression on his noble face, he was an imposing figure. In 1930 he had a paralytic stroke. Through sheer will-power and self-discipline, he recovered enough to be able to walk about with the

aid of a walking-stick. On 20th August 1931 it was the auspicious Tulsi Jayanti Day. He devoted the whole day for prayers and requested his students to sit beside him and sing Bhajans. These continued until he gently slipped away from this earthly existence on 21st August 1931.

Sadly, he lived in an era when even the greatest music could not be recorded and preserved for future generations. Death mercilessly silenced the creative genius of Vishnu Digambar's brilliant son Dattatreya in 1955 at the young age of 34. But we have at least his AIR recordings and gramophone records to cherish and preserve glimpses of the beautiful music of this worthy son of a really great and noble father who was "a great evangelist of Hindustani music".

Chapter XII

Ustad Abdul Karim Khan

In the early decades of this century, Khan Saheb Abdul Karim Khan dominated the world of Hindustani music for well over a generation, and he was a trend setter in this world in more than one sense. He created a new style or *gharaana* and gave an *elan* to the history of Hindustani music. He has been acclaimed as the “maestro who conceived, evolved, and popularised the Kirana gharana”, and in fact, he changed the entire mood of Khayal and Thumri-singing. Dr. S.N. Ratanjankar wrote to me once about him: “In the late Ustad Abdul Karim Khan Saheb’s sweet, tender, and tuneful voice, the Hindustani melodies appeared in a role and mood quite different from those in which they presented themselves in other voices...It was like a walk in a cool, moon-lit garden of sweet-smelling flowers that one felt when listening to the perfectly tuneful, and dreamy cadences of Khan Saheb’s music. One was lifted up into a dream land. The dream haunted the mind long after the music had ceased. The Khan Saheb never sang a raga, but was in holy communion with it. It was the very divine world, as it were, which bade you forget the opposites, and led you to the perfect unity with the Supreme spirit”.

Those who have been able to hear the Ustad’s music only through his gramophone records, become aware of many short

comings in his style such as the nasal twang in the voice produced through "a deliberately constricted throat", lack of *bol-alaaps*, *bol-taans*, rhythmic play, variety and grandeur. But, his contemporaries who had the good fortune to hear him in person were completely hypnotised by the sweetness of his music and his aesthetic emotion-filled rendering of ragas. Late Prof. D.P. Mukherji who was a reputed music connoisseur, wrote: "Abdul Karim Khan would invite us to enter into the sanctum of music where he was the high priest. He was not an orthodox singer. He would not even sing a composition through. His *asthayi* was not always true to form. He would make unexpected permutations and combinations.....But who cared when Abdul Karim Khan was on the dais ! This unorthodox man was a genius. ...Some of the finest exponents of Khayal today are either his pupils or his pupil's pupils. "

His *shishya-parampara* includes a long array of celebrities such as Sawai Gandharva, Baharebuwa, Sureshbabu Mane, Balakrishnabuwa Kapileswari, Dasarathbuwa Muley, Roshanara Begum, Hirabai Barodekar and many others who in their turn, have groomed another generation of reputed singers like Bhimsen Joshi, Feroz Dastur, Gangubai Hangal, Manik Verma, Saraswati Rane, Prabha Atre and others.

Abdul Karim Khan was born in 1872 in Kirana near Kurukshetra in the Punjab. Subsequently the style or Gharana that he evolved was named after his birthplace, Kiraana. In his perceptive book, "Indian Musical Traditions", Sri Vamanrao Deshpande rightly says that "each gharana has its origin in the distinctive quality of the voice of its founder and it is this quality which broadly determines his style." To this I would also add that the temperament of the founder also plays a considerable role in moulding the style of the gharana.

Abdul Karim Khan was perhaps the first North Indian musician to study Karnatic ragas and incorporate several of them into Hindustani music. His records of songs in "*Kharaharapriya*", "*Saaweri*", "*Hamsadhwani*", "*Abhogi*" etc. as well as his style of sargam-singing are proofs of his great admiration and love for Karnatic music. Perhaps no single classical musician in those days did so much for the promotion of mutual understanding between Hindustani and Karnatic

music as the late Khan Saheb did. The greatest quality of his music was "emotion par excellence", and that was the reason why his classical music was able to move audiences everywhere, whether in the North or South of India. I know of many young men and women in South India who took to Hindustani music, charmed by the spell of Khan Saheb's music. The ecstatic tributes of a discerning western musician and critic after hearing the Ustad, prove how really exalted music overleaps all barriers and transports listeners into a transcendental world. The critic writes:

"I heard him melt half and quarter tones into one another with the effect of magic--- He was a conjurer of sounds...Who that has heard him can forget him...! He not only *sang* sounds but he *became* every turn and twist in the song. The atmosphere became surcharged with a musical magic I have contacted nowhere else!".

The Kirana musical lineage came mostly from instrumentalists--chiefly Sarangiyyas. After receiving his training from Kale Khan and Abdulla Khan, Khan Saheb went over to Baroda where he was appointed as a court-musician because of his great merit. After some years, he left Baroda for Bombay, and then went to Miraj. Wherever he went, his sweet voice and captivating style of singing won for him numerous admirers. From there, he proceeded to Hubli and Dharwar and stayed with his brother Abdul Haq. The two brothers often used to sing together. A notable pupil he acquired at this time was Rambhau or Sawai Gandharwa who later on, became one of his best disciples by sheer dint of practice. The Ustad was very punctilious about his early-morning daily practice, and Rambhau unfailingly practised with his conscientious guru every morning. A true "pilgrim of melody engaged in his eternal quest of swaras", Khan Saheb was constantly on the move. When he went to Patna, Roshanara's mother became his pupil.

In 1913 Abdul Karim Khan founded the Arya Sangeet Vidyaaya in Poona. It was a unique institution because the Ustad not only imparted whole-hearted musical training, but himself supported numerous poor and deserving students, took them on tours to give musical variety shows, and trained them

up to play on various musical instruments. The ustad was an expert on many musical instruments, especially the Veena and the Sarangi. An expert in repairing musical instruments, he carried with him his set of tools for repairs everywhere because tuning the Tanpuras and perfecting their "Jawaaris" was almost an art in itself with him. The famous Sitar and Tanpura makers of Miraj revered him and looked up to his opinions for guidance.

A branch of this magnanimous institution was founded in Bombay in 1917, but it thrived for only 2 or 3 years. When the School had to be closed down, Khan Saheb migrated to Miraj where he built a house of his own, and settled down at last. Though Miraj became the centre of his activities, he continued his musical tours all over the North and even into the far South. During his stay in Hyderabad and the Madras Presidency, his list of admirers and disciples in South India swelled and his popularity grew so much that whichever town he visited, people garlanded him and took him in a grand procession like a king. The ustad was greatly drawn to the music loving people of the South, and he was one of the early Hindustani musicians to kindle a great love for Hindustani music in the people of the South. He had, and still has, hundreds of admirers in the South. In spite of all the fame and adulation that he received, Abdul Karim Khan always lived frugally like a "Sadhu", and like the Rishis of yore, Khan Saheb trained his disciples under the Gurukula system. He not only trained them thoroughly in music, but also bore the entire cost for feeding and clothing them out of his own earnings from concerts! Though a devout Muslim, and a devotee of Pir Sayyid Shamma Mira, a mystic saint (whose *dargah* is famous in Miraj), Khan Saheb was, like Kabir, a devout Hindu too, it is said. In his musical works he used to write "OM TATSAT SAMAVEDAYA NAMAH". Although born in a musical Muslim family (on 11th Nov. 1872), Abdul Karim took pride in his Hindu ancestors like Nayak DHONDU, a court-musician of Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (1486-1516 A.D). His first public concert was at the age of 11 (in 1893). Besides being such a great vocalist, Khan Saheb had also an amazing mastery over such varied instruments as Been, Sarangi, Jal-

tarang, and Tabla. In Maharashtra great men like Lokamanya Tilak and Gopalakrishna Gokhale were drawn to his music. In the South, he became a favourite musician in the Mysore darbar, and his music was highly appreciated by great Karnatak musicians like Tiger Varadacharier, Muthiah Bhagawatar and Veena Dhanammal. He also created a stir by advancing the "Shruti Samvad" theory in collaboration with the British musicologist Mr. E. Clements, and is said to have given a fine demonstration of 22 Shrutis (micro-tonal distances) with the help of 2 Veenas at a public function presided over by Dr. C.V. Raman.

One of the most melodious classical musicians we have had, Abdul Karim Khan's music always created a sublime atmosphere. The soothing quality of his specially cultivated voice, and his reposeful style of singing were such that the singer as well as his listeners forgot themselves in a sort of "trance". Many of his musical heirs have surpassed him in technical virtuosity, but few have achieved "that degree of hypnotic effect" through music. Not only did he develop his own "Kirana" style of Khayal—*badhat*, but in his voice even the Thumri "shed its gossamer erotic undertones" and assumed instead "the character of a sad, pensive, and devout supplication". Many reputed musicians of today refer to Abdul Karim Khan Saheb as "*Sachche swaron ke devata*" (the master who sang perfect notes). He had cultivated a special way of voice production so that his sweet and melodious voice mingled indistinguishably with the drone of the Tanpura strings. This was acquired by him through years of strenuous "*Mandra-sadhana*", early morning practice for several hours in the lower notes. He stressed on voice culture in his pupils also, and even when he was at the zenith of fame, he never gave up this daily "*mandra sadhana*". Another outstanding quality of his music was its emotional element. Whatever he rendered, whether a Khayal, Thumri, Hori or Bhajan, the rendition "mirrored his whole inward being". While singing Khayals, he concentrated mostly on "ALAPI", and avoided "layakari", "boltans" etc, probably because he felt these might spoil the emotional atmosphere built up by him. *Kans* (grace-notes), and "*gamakas*" as in the Sarangi,

and beautiful long unbroken “*meends*” (glides) as in the Veena, were some of the chief embellishments of his music. These and the emotion which he poured into his Thumris were so moving that often huge audiences wept when he sang some of his famous Thumris surcharged with feeling. The Gramaphone Company has done a great service by re-issuing many of his short items on a long-playing disc and striving to give us glimpses into his impassioned outpourings. Through these records of songs like “*Jamuna ke Teer*”, “*Piya Bin Nahi Awat Chain*”, “*Gopala, Karuna kyon nahi--*”, “*Piya ke milan ki aas*” and *Naina raseeli*”, we can but have just flashes of those unforgettable hours when Khan Saheb Abdul Karim Khan transported his hypnotised audiences into a world of pure, sheer melody. On inspired days, he is said to have elaborated one Raga or a single Thumri for hours, and kept his audience spell-bound throughout. Being fond of Alap-ang, Abdul Karim Khan always preferred to sing expansive ragas like Lalit, Jaunpuri, Marwa, Malkauns, Todi, Darbari and so on. Among his chief disciples, Pdt. Balkrishnabuwa Kapileswari deserves special praise for running a school, “*Shree Saraswati Sangeet Vidyalaya*” carrying on the traditions of his great ustad. In 1963 he published SHRUTIDARSHAN, a valuable research-work in music incorporating the findings of his guru and his own. The book won for him 2 important awards.

The traditions of generosity and hospitality that Abdul Karim Khan set up at the munificent annual “*Urus*” of Mirasaheb in Miraj (where he used to feed hundreds of fakirs and encourage musicians lavishly) have been kept up by his devoted widow BANUBAI, and disciples like Hirabai. Numerous were the poor music-students whom Khan Saheb had supported and trained in music. Another example of his generosity is that during his musical tours, he always took his accompanists also with him in the same compartment.

Although frail-looking, Khan Saheb maintained excellent health through regular exercises, disciplined habits, and frugal living. His photographs show him as a tall, slim person dressed immaculately in a black achkan, a cane in hand, a typical moustache and a red gold-bordered turban, and most striking of all, his dreamy eyes about which Mr K.

Subbarayan narrates an interesting little anecdote in the Bhavan's Journal (1972):-

Mystified by the dreamy eyes of the Khansaheb, Mrs Annie Besant had once discreetly enquired of a disciple whether the master was addicted to any drug. "Indeed", came the reply, "He is very much addicted to the intoxication of music!".

In 1937 Khan Saheb went down to South India to give music soirees in various parts of the Madras Presidency. A huge crowd of admirers saw him off at the Madras Station and nearly smothered him with garlands. He was on his way to Pondicherry with some friends. Feeling very unwell and restless, he detrained at one of the intermediate stations to take some rest. Before lying down, he sang his prayers set in Rag Darbari and then lay down to sleep for ever! It was a most unexpected end and yet so like this great and good artiste to round off his earthly existence with a tuneful bhajan! At the loving insistence of his admirers, his body was taken in a special car to Madras, and thence to Miraj, crowds paying their last homage to the departed singer through out the journey. At Miraj, Banubai gave him a munificent funeral. Memorial programmes to this great musician are held every year in the month of August.

CHAPTER 13

Ustad Mushtaq Hussain Khan

Ustad Mushtaq Hussain Khan of Rampur was one of our last links with a great musical past and a contemporary of many other musical giants like himself. He belonged to an era when the rich Nawabs, Maharajas and Zamindars loved music passionately, patronised the fine arts lavishly, and proudly displayed their famed court-musicians as symbols of their royal status and glory. In his book on "Indian Musical Traditions", Shri Vamanrao H. Deshpande writes:- "All musical houses grew under the aegis of feudal patronage. Gharanas have probably had an unbroken continuity for over 200 years and the seed of modern Khayal-music found fertile soil in the courts of the princes—Whatever our overall assessment of the Indian princes, there is little doubt that they really cared for music and helped its development—They gave the artistes sumptuous fees and prizes and freed them from the worries of day-to-day living so that they might devote themselves single-mindedly to the cultivation of their art and its propagation and instruction".

Ustad Mushtaq Hussain Khan was one such artiste who thrived under the valuable patronage of the Nawabs of Rampur. Nawab Hamid Ali Khan (Chancellor of the Bhatkhande College of Music, Lucknow and a friend of Pandit Bhatkhandeji) was a well-known connoisseur and patron of classical music who greatly valued his collection of court musicians and music-books. When Mushtaq Hussain Khan joined this band of celebrities at the turn of the century, he was at the peak of his glory as a concert and *mehfil* artist. Nawab Hamid Ali's

successor Nawab Raza Ali Khan also was a great connoisseur and patron of music, and he continued to cherish the distinguished band of court-musicians. Mushtaq Hussain loyally continued to be a court-musician through several decades, until his death at the ripe old age of ninety.

When I started hearing him in music conferences and private soirees, in the nineteen forties, he was already in his seventies. But even at that age, he was able to conquer the old-age frailties of his voice within the first few minutes and create the proper atmosphere of the raga in the shortest time possible. When once his voice got warmed up and became steady, his music was a delight to hear. His breath-control and the sweeping range of his voice (covering three octaves) were the envy and despair of his younger contemporary musicians.

Very little is known about Mushtaq Hussain's family, boyhood, and youth. Hailing from a family of professional musicians in Badaun, he gathered his wide musical repertoire and enriched his style at the feet of many great Ustads. Born in 1872, he received his earliest musical training from his father, then from Kallan Khan (nephew of Ustad Inayat Hussain), from Puthan Khan of Atrauli (Mustaq Hussain's maternal uncle), from Ustad Mehboob Khan of Atrauli, a great musician and composer whose pseudonym was "Daraspiya", and chiefly from the great Ustad Inayat Hussain himself. Inayat Hussain was an outstanding Khayaliya of the Gwalior gharana who belonged to the famed HADDU-HASSU musical lineage. In an interview with Prof Deodhar, Mushtaq Hussain explained the reason for this variegated training:-

"My main training was under Inayat Hussain Khan. But then, I had many other gurus. Khan Puthan Khan of Atrauli was my maternal uncle and I received some training from him. Mohammad Hussain Khan Beenkar, brother of Inayat Khan, also taught me. I learnt Dhrupad and Dhamar-singing from Ustad Wazir Khan of Rampur. And there have been many more. *One never acquires art from one gharana; if one wants a variety of colours; one must learn from many gurus*". Mahboob Khan chose Faiyaz Khan as his son-in-law, while Inayat Hussain Khan (son-in-law of Haddu Khan) became Mushtaq Hussain's father-in-law. An outstanding exponent of the

Khayal of the Gwalior gharana, Inayat was a good composer. Many of his compositions easily recognisable because of his name "Inayat" woven into them, are very popular to this day. One of his most popular Khayals is the one in Chhayanaat beginning with the words "Jhanana jhanana jhan," a favourite of Ustads Mushtaq Hussain, Faiyaz Khan, Nissar Hussain Khan and several others.

Instead of fanatically sticking to one gharana, the ustads of old gathered their musical riches from various gurus and therefore, "their music was the richer for crossing the boundaries of the gharana". I remember his telling me that musical training should always be on an eclectic basis. No wonder that his repertoire was the object of envy at a time when great value was attached, not only to the quantity but also to the quality and variety of ragas and traditional bandishes such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Thumri, Tappa, and Taranas in the repertoire of the musicians. Basically, Mushtaq Hussain's was a blended Gwailor-Agra style; but it also reflected the individual influences of the various ustads from whom he had imbibed his art. Yet, it was a pleasantly pure and orthodox style. The traditional Gwalior Gayaki associated with such great names as Haddu and Hassu Khans, can be heard very rarely today because this "school" insists on numerous strict fundamentals which can be acquired only after years of rigorous training and *riyaz*. Some of the requisites emphasised, for instance, are correct voice-control and breath-control, ability to cover three octaves, dignified and clear rendering of Asthai and Antara, skilful elaborations of sahitya or bols through bol-alaps and bol-tans, variety in taans, and so on. Mushtaq Hussain was one of the best exponents of this style in recent times. His style reflected the salient features of this gharana such as "magnificent *larajdar* and *halaktaans*, *meends*, *gamaks*, *baats* and *layakaari*--".

At the age of fourteen, Mushtaq Hussain accompanied his guru to Nepal where Inayat Hussain had been specially invited to teach the Maharaja. While continuing his "*taleem*" under the Ustad, Mushtaq Hussain had the good fortune to participate in a music conference convened by the Maharaja. During the six months when Mushtaq's voice remained

"broken " before it acquired the mature timbre of manhood, he was allowed to continue only his *kharaj*-practice (practice of vocal exercises in the lower octave). A few years later, he accompanied his guru to Hyderabad where they stayed for nearly ten years. Ultimately, both teacher and disciple migrated to Rampur where they settled down. Mushtaq Hussain became a court musician of Rampur and he adorned the court for several decades. In the grand All India Music Conference held in Lucknow in the year 1924, Mushtaq Hussain was awarded the Gold Medal for the best Khayal singer. Though a permanent court musician of Rampur, he was allowed to go anywhere in India to participate in conferences, mehfils and radio programmes. As he was a regular broadcaster from the Lucknow Station of All India Radio, I had numerous opportunities to listen to his music and his reminiscences. Whether it was a crowded conference in the White Baradari, a studio concert of AIR, or a private exclusive soiree in the Nawab Saheb's presence, Mushtaq Hussain poured out his music with all sincerity, fulfilling farmaish after farmaish. His memory was a rich storehouse of hundreds of traditional "bandishes" and he could render Dhrupads, Dhamars, Khayals, Tappas, Thumris, Ragsagars and Taranas, all with great confidence. A well-known music teacher once said to me :- "Ustad Mushtaq Hussain Khan is the only musician today whom I would care to have as a guru". He commanded great respect among professional musicians because of his "gharaanedar Gaayaki" (high-class style).

Often, the Ustad used to speak very sentimentally about his great teachers, and while rendering their compositions, he always touched his ears as a mark of reverence. He had great affection and regard for Ustad Faiyaz Khan about whom he used to say :- "*Woh to mere bhai hain*" (he is my brother"). There was a healthy rivalry between these two great contemporary ustads. Faiyaz Khan was always far more popular on account of his grand personality and magnificent voice. Though Mushtaq Hussain looked frail and unimpressive off-stage, his personality acquired a strange dignity when he started singing. One can gauge the intensity of his "sadhana" when I say that even in his late eighties, his voice could cover 3 octaves,

produce long *meends* (glides), and varied *taans*! The systematic style in which he used to unfold the *asthayi* and *anatara* (the two stanzas of the song) and gradually embellish the song with alap, bol-alaps, taans etc gave immense satisfaction to connoisseurs. He used to sing many varieties of *taans* but most impressive were his “*sapaath*” (straight) *taans* in which all the notes of the raga come gushing up and then go down “like a jet of water from a fountain”. He used to be a stickler for the rules of the raga, but when singing these *taans* he would set aside these rules for a while and touch all the 7 notes in quick succession. One of his specialities was the *Ragasagar* or *Raga-mala*, or a chain of ragas wherein the name of each raga is sung in the notes of that raga, couched in beautiful language. His *Tappas* were sung in a comparatively slow tempo and were full of unhurried ornamentations.

The musicians of that era had very few chances to hear Karnatak maestros. Once when I asked Mushtaq Hussain about his reactions to Karnatak music, his reply was. ‘When I listen to Karnatak music with all its heavy ornamentations, I feel I am looking into a shaking mirror. In order to create an atmosphere one has to linger on each note as in Hindustani music’. This was a typical reaction of many professional ustadz in those days.

Mushtaq Hussain continued his broadcasts till the fag end of his life and AIR has preserved quite a few of his recordings. Unfortunately, they were all done in his old age. The gramophone company has produced Long Playing discs out of some of these AIR recordings. The compositions in Mahakni, Meerabai-Ki-Malhar, Jog, Jhinjhoti Jangala etc give glimpses into his large stock of rare bandishes. He was well-deservedly honoured with the Presidential Award and the Padma Bhushan. Although Mushtaq Hussain taught his own sons and many others outside his family, it is a great pity that today there is hardly anyone who can continue to popularise his rich style. Like all great men, he was simple, humble and courteous. Music was his sole interest in life and he continued to be a performing artist till his last illness. Mushtaq Hussain died in Delhi on 11th August, 1962.

CHAPTER 14

Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa

After the gaiety, crowds and illuminations of the previous two days, Lucknow was observing *Ashra*, the mournful 10th day of *Moharram*. By 10 a.m. the sad news of the sudden death of Thirakwa Khan Saheb had spread among the music-lovers of Lucknow. While the *Tazias* were being taken for burial by processions of mourners performing *maatam*, a stream of mourners from the music-world went to pay their last respects to the Ustad who had reigned supreme as "the Tabla-wizard" of the country for the last 7 or 8 decades. Once a permanent resident of Lucknow, he had migrated just a few years ago to Bombay where he was not only the inspiration behind Nikhil Ghosh's School of Music, but was also serving as a Visiting Professor in the National Centre for Performing Arts. On January, 8, he had come home to Lucknow to keep a tryst with destiny and to fulfil his promise: "*Mai hamesha hamesha Lucknow me rahoonga*". On the morning of 13th January 1976 he was in a rickshaw on his way the Charbagh Railway Station to catch the Bombay Mail, when he collapsed in the rickshaw and died.

Ustad Thirakwa's death marks the end of courtly era in music and in his death we have lost the seniormost and most colourful personality among the Table maestros of today. Although he had spent the best years of his life amidst the pomp and pageantry of splendid royal courts where art and sensitive appreciation of it are held in the highest esteem, the Ustad with great dignity stepped out of the leisurely courtly life into the hectic tempo of the modern machine-age when the era of

darbari music ended. In fact, he was a vital link between two eras in Indian music.

Born 98 years ago in a family of musicians in Moradabad, Ahmad Jan started with vocal music lessons right from his childhood under Ustad Mithoo Khan. His father Hussain Bux was a well-known *Sarangiya* from whom Ahmad Jan received Sarangi lessons for some time, but as the latter himself told me once:- "In spite of all these factors, I was not really drawn to the art until I heard Ustad Munir Khan, the great Tabla-Ustad of Meerut. I suddenly realised that my *rooh* really lay in the Tabla. I took early lessons in Tabla from my uncles *Sher* Khan, Faiyaz Khan, and Baswa Khan. However, my ideal guru was Ustad Munir Khan and I really put my heart into my *riyaz*, only after I became his pupil at the age of 12. My Ustad was not only a great *Tabaliya* but also a generous guru. He used to make me practise for nearly 16 hours per day, with half-hour breaks now and then for my meals, etc., and barely 6 hours of sleep. I had to take regular exercise, and plenty of rich food essential for such a rigorous routine of *riyaz*". Ahmad Jan was brought up by his brother Miyan Jan Khan who not only gave him all the facilities to devote himself entirely to the art, but also provided him with a rich diet of nutritious food and plenty of milk. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why his stamina as a performing artiste remained unimpaired till the last year of his life. Anyway, young Ahmad Jan's extraordinary talent and devoted practice pleased Munir Khan so much that the boy became the guru's favourite '*Shagird*' in no time. The Ustad's father Kale Khan used to watch the extraordinary progress of his son's young pupil, and one day he remarked with admiration: "The boy's fingers really dance with the laya (*Laya me thirakti hain*).". This complimentary epithet "Thirakkoo" stuck to his name, and when Ahmad Jan became famous throughout the country it was as "Thirakwa", the tabla-wizard with the dancing fingers. Besides Thirakwa, the other reputed *Tabaliyas* of Munir Khan's Gharana have been Ustad Amir Hussain(nephew of Munir Khan), Ghulam Hussian, Shamsuddin, P. Nageshkar, Sripad Nageshkar, Nikhil Ghosh, Ghulam Rasool and others.

Thirakwa used to recall with a glow of joy his most successful conference-debut at the age of 16 in Khetbadi, Bombay. The thunderous ovation that he received from the audience on that occasion never ceased to echo in his ears. He achieved wide popularity as a member of Bal Gandharva's Theatrical Company. Soon, invitations from music conferences began to pour in, and Thirakwa became one of the busiest artistes of the North. In 1936 he was appointed a court-musician of Rampur, a post which he adorned for the next 30 years during which he heard and accompanied the greatest musicians of his time. No wonder, he had an endless stock of stories relating to the rajas, nawabs and court-musicians which he used to narrate to us in his own inimitable style. One such story was about Nawab Kalbe Ali Khan (of Rampur), an accomplished musician and a great patron of music, whose reverence for his guru Bahadur Khan, the great Sursingar-expert, caused so much heartburn among the courtiers and relatives of the Nawab Saheb that one day he decided to teach them a lesson. He seated his guru outside the durbar-hall and invited all the courtiers and princes to attend court at 10 a.m. punctually. But, so entrancing was Bahadur Khan's Sursingar-recital that all the invitees to the court remained as if spellbound, and forgot to attend the court. Regarding his patron, Nawab Raza Ali Khan of Rampur, Thirakwa used to say: "I got on very well with my patron. The Nawab Saheb was always generous to me, and I served him loyally". With what consideration and deference, this great Ustad used to accompany the Nawab Saheb when the latter used to play on his Castanets or Ghunghroos to entertain his friends!

When the court-musicians were all disbanded in the new set-up, Thirakwa migrated to Lucknow where he was appointed Professor and Head of the Faculty of Tabla in the Bhatkhande College of Music. Even after he retired, he was closely associated with this institution as an Emeritus Professor. During his Rampur years as well as during his college years, he was a most popular and frequent broadcaster from the Lucknow Station of AIR. And of course, he was constantly in demand at Music Conferences, AIR concerts, Sangeet Sammelans, and *Mehfils* all over the country. His popularity, in fact, never

waned, because he kept up his rigorous *riyaz*, and his high standard till the end. His last unforgettable performance was in the Radio Sangeet Sammelan, 1974, in which he once again proved that even after he had become a nonegenarian, his devotion to, and mastery over, the Tabla remained as unmatched as ever. Although his voice in normal conversation had tended to become shaky, it was amazing that while reciting the complicated and jaw-breaking *tabla-bols* and *parans*, his voice seemed to regain its lost steadiness and strength. Numerous disciples of his scattered all over the north have achieved renown such as :- Lalji Gokhakale (of AIR, Bombay), Prem Vallabh and Ghulam Ahmad (of AIR, Delhi), Chchote Gokhale (of AIR, Pune), Nikhil Ghosh (Bombay), Ahmad Ali and Ram Kumar Sharma (of Lucknow) and so on.

Although Thirakwa was essentially a soloist, there has been hardly any leading soloist or instrumentalist in the last 5 or 6 decades whom he had not accompanied in the course of his long and distinguished career spanning many generations. Among the unforgettable maestros he accompanied on the tabla were Ustads Allahbande Khan, Rajab Ali Khan, Alladiya Khan, Wahid Khan, Allauddin Khan, Bhaskarbuwa Bakle, Faiyaz Khan, Mushtaq Hussain, Hafiz Ali, Ali Akbar, Bismillah Khan, Begum Akhtar, R. Daggur and so on. Once I happened to ask Thirakwa Sahib as to who was the vocalist he enjoyed accompanying most of all. Without a moment's hesitation, he replied: "I found the greatest joy in accompanying Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Vilayat Hussian, and Abdulla Khan of the Agra Gharana, because their control over *Taal* was superb". In fact, his admiration for the *Aftab-e-Mausiqui* was only equalled by the latter's for him. There was such perfect mutual understanding between them that once at a music conference in which some other Tabaliya was accompanying Ustad Faiyaz Khan, the latter is said to have blurted out at one place: "*Na huwa Thirakwa*" ("No one can take Thirakwa's place"). Honours like the *Padma Bhushan* came to him naturally.

Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa had a wealth of reminiscences, a good sense of humour, and the ability to imitate many vocalists. Hence he often used to entertain us with many interesting episodes and anecdotes pertaining to colourful *mehfils* of the

past. Without his actual demonstration of the singing and *Tabla bols*, such narrations lose much of their impact. However, here is one such story in his words:- "You people perhaps have never had the good fortune to hear Rajab Ali Khan of Dewas. He was a wonderful singer, famous for his *taiyari* (speed). But he had a sly habit of accelerating the speed of his fast Khayal and keeping the poor Tabla-accompanist suspended in that awful tempo for a long time, while he himself would keep on singing in an easy, even tempo. One day he started this stunt on me. I thought of an equally cunning trick. Instead of sweating out the lightning *laya*, I really started accompanying his *taans* mathematically. This way I could go on playing the whole night without getting tired, but the singer would get tired very soon. Instead of getting irritated, Rajab Ali Khan appreciated my ingenuity, and we had a good laugh over it".

Confident that nothing could reduce his artistic stature, Thirakwa never minded providing accompaniment to even the younger artistes of his time. If the organizers hesitated to schedule the name of this veteran with a young artiste, he would laugh and ask: "If I do not mind, why should you?" When an artiste had reached his status why should he mind about such petty "snobberies" in music.

Thirakwa was proficient in all the styles of *Tabla Baaj* such as "*Dilli*", "*Poorab*", "*Farukkabadi* and *Ajrada*, but "*Dilli*" and "*Farukkabadi*" were his favourites. His recipes for success for today's tabla-pupils are "correct and sincere *taleem*, long and continuous years of *riyaz*, regular physical exercises, and lots of good nourishing food". He has proved the worth of these through his own personal example. He remained popular throughout his career not only because he was an authority on his subject, but also because of his dignified and accommodating nature. I had often wondered why this top artiste never participated in any cultural delegation going abroad, and once asked him. He laughed at himself and confessed: "I was offered many chances, but each time I refused because I am plain scared of flying."

The older generation of musicians and music-lovers shake their heads in despair and remark: "Many great Tabaliyas have come and gone, but there has been only *one* Thirakwa"!

One will always remember Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa's "courtly" personality— the black "achkan" and cap, the blackened moustache, the surma-lined eyes, the silver-capped walking-stick, the polite *adaab-arz* or *meherbani apkî*, his courteous manners, and his mastery over the Tabla. The Tabla Baaj has been deprived for ever of the dancing fingers of Thirakwa, the Tabla Wizard.

CHAPTER 15

Ustad Faiyaz Khan

The various *gharanas* in Hindustani music constitute a rich heritage of artistic traditions, which has been transmitted to us orally through generations of great musicians. The *Gwalior*, *Agra*, *Kirana*, *Delhi*, *Jaipur*, *Atrauli*, *Patiala* and other *gharanas* have produced some of our greatest maestros such as Haddu-Hassu Khans, Tanras Khan, Ghagge Khuda Bux, Rahmat Khan, Alia-Fattu, Umrao Khan, Ghulam Abbas Khan, Nathan Khan, and so many others. Ustad Faiyaz Khan popularly called "Aftab-e-Mousiqui", was "the ultimate flowering of the genius of the Agra or *Rangila Gharana*." He summed up in himself the finest traditions of his *ghurana* and was its greatest exponent in recent times. He belonged passionately to his age, "and yet, he belonged to an infinitely more glorious past of our music and its traditions".

Faiyaz Khan's musical lineage goes back to Tansen himself. His family is traced back to Alakhdas, Malukdas and then to Haji Sujan Khan (son of Alakhdas who became a Muslim.) Genius, musical ancestry, and training combined to give us this wonderful artist—one of the most reputed and respected exponents of Hindustani classical music in recent times. He had the exceptional good fortune of receiving his *talim* in *Dhrupad* singing from his grand father, Ghulam Abbas Khan, and in *Dhamar* from his grand uncle, Ustad Kallan Khan, both of whom were leading musicians of the *rangila gharana* in the second half of the last century. Kallan Khan was the younger brother of Ghulam Abbas Khan and, therefore, the grand-uncle of Faiyaz Khan Sahib. Ghulam Abbas Khan was his maternal

grandfather, and *Rangeela* Ramzan Khan his paternal great grandfather. Faiyaz Khan's uncle, Fida Hussain was a court musician in Tonk (Rajputana). Faiyaz was born at Sikandra near Agra in 1880 and he died in Baroda on 5th November 1950. As his father Safdar Hussain died very early, his grandfather adopted him and brought him up as his own son. Ghulam Abbas Khan, the son of the great Ghagge Khuda Bux and an intimate friend of Bairam Khan, not only imparted to the boy the authentic *taleem* of his gharana, but also took the promising young Faiyaz on a "pilgrimage of music", visiting all the important centres of music, listening to great contemporary musicians, and bringing him practical experience in concert singing. By the time he was 18, Faiyaz Khan had become such a "polished" artist that he began to give recitals in places like Bombay, Calcutta and Gwalior. Once at Bombay, 24 year-old Faiyaz got a chance to hear the great Miyanjan Khan, a pupil of the great Fateh Ali Khan of Patiala. Immediately after him, Faiyaz was asked to sing. At first he copied Miyanjan Khan's Multani in the latter's style and then he demonstrated in his own style—both in such a masterly way that Miyanjan Khan embraced the young singer and exclaimed in genuine appreciation: "*Tum hi ustad ho*" (you are a true descendant of the masters of the art.) It was an age of gentlemen-musicians.

In addition to all the valuable training and experience given to him by his loving grandfather-(*Nana*)-cum-Ustad, there was Faiyaz's own native genius "an eternally intangible factor" that shapes the destinies of great men. Ghulam Abbas Khan, who is said to have lived to the incredible old age of 120, saw his favourite grandson mature into a maestro with a grand future ahead of him.

Once when certain mischief-mongers tried to arrange a competition between the great Bhaskar Buwa Bhakle and the young Faiyaz Khan, the former is reported to have been so impressed with Faiyaz's performance that he refused to stand up as a rival, and to the utter disappointment of the men behind the mischief, embraced him "as a brother."

In 1908, a grand competition was arranged in Mysore between Ustad Faiyaz Khan and Ustad Hafiz Khan of the

Mysore Durbar. Both sang for hours and sang so splendidly that it became difficult to decide who should get the first prize. Nevertheless, the Maharaja who felt enraptured by Faiyaz Khan's music conferred on him the title of 'Aftab-e-Mausiqui,' meaning "the sun of music." Soon after this, the Lahore All India Music Conference gave him the title of 'Sangeet Chudamani.' At another famous All India music conference, organised by Pdt. Bhatkhandeji, Faiyaz Khan was selected as the top-most khayal-singer of the day. It was no wonder then that Pdt. Bhatkhandeji chose him as the guru of his favourite pupil, Sri Krishna Narayan Ratanjankar and took him to Kashmir, from where his fame spread far and wide.

At an All India Music Conference held in Baroda, which was attended by more than 400 singers, Faiyaz Khan captivated the audience so deeply that they showed their appreciation by handing over to him a purse of 33,000 rupees.

Though Ustad Faiyaz Khan had settled down in Baroda as a court musician, he was always travelling because no music conference was deemed complete without his performance. Thanks to All India Radio, thousands of his admirers all over the country used to be thrilled by his rich velvety voice whenever he broadcast from Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta or Lucknow. To the last, he remained the President of the All India Society for Contemporary Music.

As one of the privileged few in whose home, the *Aftab-e-Mausiqui* gave several informal all-night music soirees, I feel at a loss for words when I try to describe the spellbinding effect of his voice, "a rich, masculine, sonorous, trembling with emotion, a voice capable of a thousand nuances and shades, moods and fancies, turns and twists", a voice that touched the very chords of the listeners' hearts. His voice was at its grandest in the *mandra* (lower) notes. Its range was not wide, in fact, it was quite limited in the *taar saptak* (higher octave), but in these 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ octaves he used to bring out "a living picture of the *raga* pulsating with life and personality."

Steeped in the *Dhrupad-Dhamar - alap*-traditions of his gharana, he was the only musician who could hold even a lay audience in a spell while he sang his full-blooded *alap* in its purest traditional form. His music was a fine blending of

intelligence, imagination, and emotion. With what effortless charm and creative energy, the Ustad used to evoke the ethos of the raga, build up the theme of the *bandish*, and touch the emotions of the listeners.

There was intense mutual admiration between the *Aftab-e-Mausiqni* and Thirakwa, the tabla-wizard. One can have an idea of his musical versatility when one remembers how he could render anything from a Dhrupad to a Ghazal with equal ease and mastery, and how he was always in his element whether in a crowded conference hall, in a grand old darbar, or in a friend's informal drawing room. Each raga was 'a living personality' for him. Often he used to say; "One must play with a Raga with a lover's passion. One must learn to love it, to pay court to it, like a cavalier, and then alone can a musician tell the story of joy and grief, of laughter and tears. Music must please and move."

He was aware of the appeal of simplicity and spontaneity and never resorted to any display of vocal acrobatics. It was his genuine passion for ragas that enabled Faiyaz Khan to visualise each raga as a sentient being through which he could unravel for us a vast range of emotions. Those who have their favourites among Ragas like Darbari, Jaijaiwanti, Des, Anandi Nat Behag, Todi, Ramkali, Jaunpuri, Jogiya, Bhairavi, Pilu, Kafi, Barwa, Bageshwari, Sohini, etc, will always remember how he could evoke varied emotions and how amazingly he could travel from the colourful and the romantic to the sombre and the pathetic, then from the realms of fancy, conceit to youthful gusto. "By turns, they felt the glowing mind disturbed, delighted raised, refined - - - rapt, i nspired."

There was a grandeur in his sweeping alaps, dignity and vigour in his *boltans*, and joy in his *bolbant*. The Aftab-e-Mausiqui has enriched the Agra school of music as no one else has done. His style, though essentially of the *rangila gharana*, was a superb blend of the characteristics of that plus traces of the Gwalior style, enlivened by his own creative inspiration. Though his music had its roots in time-honoured tradition he was no conservative. "Of course", he said once, "you must realise that our present-day music has fallen from the heights of its past glory. Yet I am an inveterate optimist

and believe that some good will come out of the present revival."

Ustad Faiyaz Khan's music had certain distinguishing traits. Blessed with a powerful voice capable of many minute modulations, he could easily sway his audiences whether he sang dignified Dhrupads, playful Horis or Dhamars, artistic Khayals, or tuneful Dadras. The dignity of his khayal-singing was reminiscent of the grand style of musicians like Haddu Khan and Hassu Khan. His renderings of Thumri and Dadra are said to have been like those of the great Moizzuddin. As a discerning music critic has said : "He converted even Ghazals into very presentable things... From alap to Thumri, his genius occupied a range which mediocre talents cannot even survey." His deep knowledge of, and long practice in, each raga, can be gauged when one hears how during his stay in Kashmir with Pdt. Bhatkhandeji, he sang Rag Yaman for hours daily, for one full month. His style of *alap*, *bant barhat* and *Tankartab* was remarkable. He has composed many songs under the pseudonym "*Prem Piya*" and contributed many old songs to Bhatkhande's "*Kramik Pustakmala*." Though fully aware of the limitations of the textbook teaching in music schools and colleges, he was sensible enough to admit :

"I recommend textbooks for beginners only. But a textbook cannot produce a musician. Music institutions should concentrate more on *Gayaki* or style. How can the music of Tansen be turned into a textbook? Music in this country was handed down orally from generation to generation with the help of memory and tradition and has flourished up to this time." The Ustad's opinion on broadcasting was characteristically humorous: "I like it immensely, except for the red light which is the signal for a forced landing. I enjoy being on the air.",

While people used to admire his flawless diction in Urdu, Hindi, etc, they used to be amazed at his graceful and fine pronunciation of Braj-Bhasha in which a large number of Khayals, Dhamars, etc, are couched. This was because Faiyaz Khan spent his early years in the Braj-Bhasha areas like Mathura, Agra, Atrauli, etc. His father-in-law, Mahboob Khan of Atrauli, was none other than the reputed composer *Daras Piya* whose khayals in ragas like. Jog, Anandi, etc, are still so popular. Another relation--*Saras Piya*--was a wellknown

composer who lived a recluse's life in Mathura.

The song *Man Mohan Brij ko Rasiya* (in Paraj) which Faiyaz Khan has made famous, is a sample of Saras Piya's compositions.

Faiyaz Khan himself composed many songs under the pen-name *Prem Piya*.

In his youthful 'halcyon days' Faiyaz Khan sat in the company of great artists like Moizzuddin, Bhaiya Ganapatrao, and Malkajan. That was how he had imbibed the romantic Thumri style and could render Dadras and Ghazals so imaginatively. Many a time I have witnessed Faiyaz Khan rendering the Bhairavi Thumri "Babul Mora" and drawing tears out of the listeners' eyes. Faiyaz Khan used to say that Malkajan's Bhairavi-Thumris were peerless. And Malka even in her obscure later years never missed the Ustad's concerts in Calcutta. Unlike some highbrow musicians, Faiyaz Khan never looked down on light classical types of songs. He used to say:- "It is not a child's play to sing a Thumri or a Ghazal. The essence is the *bol*—but one has to be very imaginative and original." Even into a simple Dadra he could pour a lot of genuine emotion.

In spite of his short stature, Ustad Faiyaz Khan had a dignified personality. It is said that in his younger days he used to look so courtly in his gold embroidered black *achkan*, black cap, and imposing moustache, that once he was mistaken for the ruler himself in a certain darbar. Though he had no school education; he had an innate sense of culture which enabled him to appreciate the good things of life. A thorough gentleman, he was generous, tender hearted and full of warmth with a capacity for lasting friendships. Modest and unassuming, courteous and polite, he combined greatness with childlike simplicity. The Ustad never hurt others' feelings, could never tolerate slander or gossip. People from all walks of life were drawn to him by his sauvity, natural culture, humility and kind heartedness. As an artist he was surrounded by admirers wherever he went.

It was in small and exclusive, informal private *soirees* that the true qualities of the man and his music were fully revealed. No amateur's music was too insignificant for this great Ustad. He had a word of encouragement for every young aspirant in the art. Even in his late sixties, he carried with him the exotic

atmosphere of the Moghul court.

Among the well-known pupils that the Ustad left behind may be mentioned Ustad Khadim Hussain Khan (the Central Akademy Award Winner of 1978), Latafat Hussain (now teaching in the ITC Research Akademy Calcutta), the late Dr. S. N. Ratanjankar, Pt. Dilip Chandra Vedi, Ata Hussain Khan, and the youngest of them all—Sharafat Hussain Khan.

In the words of his great admirer late Dr S. K. Chaubey, “He was the last of the race of giants. The like of him will not be born again. He was a gift—a national asset. As time widens the gulf between the noble dead and the hopeful living, he stands out as a beacon-light, a bulwark of genius and tradition, whose inspiration will not be wasted even on the most cynical among us.”

A widower for years, Faiyaz Khan left behind no child when he died in 1950, but he was mourned by thousands of admirers all over the country. The passing of Faiyaz Khan Saheb marked the end of a great era in music. Though he was 70, his music had retained a youthful vigour, and a variety that age could not wither. He was a maestro and a phenomenon in the world of Hindustani music, and “his art symbolised the grand evolution of Hindustani music from the ancient Dhrupad - Dhamar to the more modern Khayal - Thumri.” His music was characterised by dignity, grandeur and rich emotion.

It is indeed a pity that gramophone records do him no justice. Even his long tapes and LP Discs hardly give glimpses into his grand world of music. But those of us who have been lucky to hear him in person, will never cease mourning: “*Daiya Kahan gaye we log*” (Where have those great ones gone?)

Chapter 16

Sufi Inayat Khan

Many years ago, Mrs H. van Tuyl van Serooskerken, an ardent Dutch lover of Indian classical music wrote to me from the Hague, requesting me to give her all the information I could gather about the great Sufi-mystic-musician—Pir Inayat Khan who had earned great popularity and fame in the West during his travels (from 1910 to 1926) in the U.S.A., U.K. and Europe. She wrote:- “I am a pupil of the late musician and philosopher Professor Inayat Khan of Baroda, the grandson and pupil of Professor Moula Baksh of Baroda...We people of the west are getting more and more interested in the grandeur and beauty of Indian music... During the first World War, Prof Inayat Khan (known in the west as Pir-O Murshid) lost his whole set of 22 gramophone records which were made in Calcutta by the firm VICTOR between 1908-1910...”

I felt quite ashamed of myself because when I received this letter from Holland I knew next to nothing about this Sufi musician of India. However, her letter whetted my appetite to learn more about this great savant who had earned a high reputation and many followers abroad, and is yet, so little-known in his own country. Subsequently, I have been able to gather the following information about the Pir-O-Murshid, thanks to the curiosity aroused by the letters from this music-lover living in Holland! She had also been generous enough to send me a couple of good photographs of her guru and thoughtfully added:- “Please keep these photos; it might occur that some day people may ask you about this musician, and you will be

glad to have these photos". The photo in this book is one of the two sent by H. van Tuyl van Serooskerken years ago. Many thanks to her.

Inayat Khan Rahmatkhan Pathan was the grandson of Prof. Moula Bux, the eminent founder of the Academy of Indian Music established in Baroda under the patronage of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda. It is said that Moula Bux's wife was a grand-daughter of Tippu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore. However, it was not the martial qualities of the Tippu blood, but the rich musical and spiritual heritage of Prof. Moula Bux that Inayat Khan had inherited. He was born in Baroda on 5th July, 1882. The most important influence on him during his early formative years was that of his grandfather. Even as a schoolboy, he showed great liking for poetry, music, and religion. Once he pleased the Maharaja Scindia so much with his singing of a classical song (in Sanskrit) that the royal patron rewarded him with a valuable necklace and a scholarship. Very early in life Inayat Khan shaped into a versatile linguist with a remarkable, mastery over several languages such as Sanskrit, Gujarati, Marathi, Urdu, Hindi, Persian, Arabic, and English! He did not seem to be interested in any of the games that boys are usually fond of. A very thoughtful boy with a serious bent of mind, he preferred the company of elders, intellectuals and artistes who surrounded his revered grandfather. At eleven he managed a small organisation "Bala Sabha" where he astounded his listeners by his fluent speeches in his attractive sonorous voice. Right from an early age, he was very broad-minded, kind-hearted towards all—irrespective of caste, creed, colour, and status. While his academic and musical training was going on successfully under the loving and close supervision of Prof. Moula Bux, it was Inayat Khan's father Rahmat Khan (Pathan) who moulded his religious temperament and his noble character with simple teachings such as:- "Tell only the Truth; Truth is God; lead a pure and simple life. Forget all the good you do, but remember your faults and mistakes". "*Neki kar paani me daal* (Do good and forget about it); *Baadi kar pallu me baandh* (Remember all your misdeeds)".

Alongside his academic studies, the young Inayat did excellently in the five years music course of the Baroda Music

Academy under the expert guidance of his grandfather who was himself a great musician, Veena player and composer. Moula Bux is also remembered as one of the pioneers in introducing notation into Indian music. In the final examinations of the Academy, Inayat Khan topped in both vocal and instrumental music. What was even more remarkable was the fact that he was equally good in Karnatak as well as Hindustani music. Gifted with a sweet and sonorous voice, he could keep his listeners in a spell. What set apart his music from that of the others was the fact that he considered music as a sacred and divine art. He composed beautiful songs with religious word-contents and he poured his soul into them as he rendered them.

Inayat Khan was the author of many books on music such as:— “*Minqar Mousiquar*,” “*Sree Sayaji Garbavali*”, “*Inayat Fiddle Shikshak*”, and “*Inayat Harmonium Shikshak*.”

Recently I was delighted to come across his book *Inayat Geet-Ratnavali* which was published by the Baroda Vatsal Printing Press and Bombay Equator Printing Press in the year 1903. At that time, the book was priced at an incredibly low sum of Rupee One ! Today, 77 years later, the owner of this yellowing and dilapidated book will not think of parting with it for any tempting sum! The book is dedicated to the royal patron:- “H.H. Gaekwad Sayajirao Maharaja Saheb”, and the author’s name is given in full as “Professor Inayat Khan Rahmatkhan Pathan, Musical Educationist and Gold Medallist.” The book contains a mixed assortment of 75 songs—Thumris, Dadras, Ghazals, Bhajans, Khayals, Lavanis, Horis, and even a few English songs—all given in the notation system initiated by Prof Moula Bux. The songs are couched in Karnatak as well as Hindustani ragas such as Kharaharapriya, Shankaraabharanam, Keerwani, Mand, Manji, Sindhura, Badhams, Zila; Hussaini, Barwa, Sorat-Malhar and so on---all of which goes to prove Inayat Khan’s knowledge of both the Karnatak and Hindustani systems of music. There are songs in praise of Lord Ganesha, and Lord Gopal (Krishna). His compositions can be identified by the name “Inayat” woven into the last line. Grateful references are made to Prof. Moula Bux, founder of the system of notation followed in the book. A major part of the Introduction is a

paeon of praise to him. Inayat Khan writes:— “Taking pity on the degraded state of our classical music, God has specially created a great man like my grandfather who established music-schools, introduced notation-system, composed many songs, and popularised our music widely--”.

The long introductory chapter by Inayat Khan is in a very strange dialect of Hindustani and spelt unusually. There is a Testimonial (dated 16th June, 1902) written by Sri Sreenivasa Raghava Iyengar (Ex-Dewan of Baroda State) whose children had been students of Ustad Inayat Khan. Sri Iyengar says in the Testimonial:— “... Prof Inayat Khan comes of a distinguished family of musicians, his grandfather being the famous Prof. Moula Bux, a distinguished professor of Hindu music, author of a series of graduated text-books in music. He is the nephew of Dr. A.M. Pathan, L.R.A.M who was educated in England and in the European system of music and passed his examinations with high distinction. Inayat Khan has studied both the Hindu and European system scientifically and has already acquired great proficiency in the former. He has winning manners...”

From 1900 to 1910, Inayat Khan made an extensive tour of the length and breadth of India. He and his maternal uncle Murtuza Khan visited Nepal, Gwalior (to pay his obeissance near Tansen's tomb), Banares, and the Punjab. During these tours, he came into contact with many musicians, Sufi mystics, Swamis and saints who initiated him into the mysteries of sound and into the mystic beauties of the Art of Music. The death of his dear grandfather Moula Bux in 1896 at the age of 63 was the first blow in young Inayat Khan's life. When he lost his gentle, pious mother in 1902, he decided to spend his time wandering all over this vast sub-continent. At first he visited all the important places in South India and made warm contacts with a number of cultured and important people. Wherever he sang or gave lecture-demonstrations everyone was charmed and Inayat was presented with medals and “addresses.” One such address, presented by the music-loving public of Madras is published in the *Inayat Geet Ratnavali*. It says:—

To Prof. Inayat Khan Rahmat Khan Pathan, Musician of Baroda.
Dear Sir,

We, on behalf of the public of Madras, have assembled here to express our deep-felt joy at having had you in our midst—The public entertainment given by you on 12-7-1902 has led us to form a very high opinion of your attainments in the history and practice of Music. It is no wonder that young as you are, you have acquired such pre-eminence in your Art and displayed a wonderful insight into its intricacies for which a right explanation is to be found in the fact that you are descended from that great and famous musician Prof. Moula Bux who is renowned throughout India You have not only given us exquisite pleasure by your sweet melody and scientific harmony of your songs, but you have created in us an instantaneous appetite for the symphonies of the celestial art of music. It is gratifying to us that you have made it your life-work to improve the Music of India, to introduce a uniform system of notation, and also establish some sort of friendly understanding between the Hindustani and gentle Karanatic systems and musicians. We sincerely wish you all success in your noble undertaking. Your skill, talents, and manners have endeared you to us. May you win the affection of all those whom you come in contact with. Please accept this gold medal as a slight token of our sincere gratitude and high esteem for your talents and attainments-----”

The above is only a sample of the many addresses he received from his appreciative audiences. It was also the age of Gold Medals.

From South India, Inayat Khan went to Colombo, and then to Calcutta, where Babu Lahiri, a Sufi in spirit, arranged for his lecture-demonstrations in the University Hall in the presence of Gurudev Tagore, Sir Gurudas Benerji and other celebrities. In deep appreciation, the people honoured him with the title of the “Morning Star of Indian Music Revival.” He made numerous friends and admirers in Calcutta through his sweet music. It was during this trip that the Victor Gramophone Company cut several discs of his. Alas, none of them are available any longer in India, except perhaps in the precious collection of some music connoisseurs. Many have been already

taken away by his numerous followers in Holland. Mrs. H. van Tuyl van S. had also mentioned this in her letters to me:- "The Firm VICTOR does not exist any more in Calcutta and the records are long since sold out. I am now making every effort possible to retrace the whereabouts of those old records of Prof. Inayat Khan of India. A few months ago I was at last so fortunate to find one of those records in a private collection in Dacca. May I ask you if you have ever come across any of his records in India? As Prof. Inayat Khan who sang and played on the Vina was for years travelling in the south of India where his singing was highly admired, also stayed for a year in Calcutta. I suppose that the greatest chance of finding his records would be in those parts of the country. . . . There is a difficulty in the fact that there existed more musicians with the name of Inayat Khan. However, only those records on which is printed the word 'Baroda' together with the name of Prof. Inayat Khan are genuinely his. . . .".

In a very informative article on Hazrat Inayat Khan, Sri Vibhu Kumar S. Desai explains how the true secret of Inayat Khan's "divine music" lay in its "soul quality" which captivated easterners and westerners alike. Quoting Inayat Khan's musical credo, Sri Desai writes:- "The true use of music is to be musical in one's thoughts, words and actions. True harmony of music comes from the harmony of the soul, its true source, and when it comes from there, it must appeal to all souls".

Once when the Nizam asked Inayat Khan to explain why listeners found his music "so divine and magical", the latter is said to have replied:- "Your Highness as sound is the highest sources of manifestation, it is mysterious within itself and whosoever has the knowledge of sound, he indeed knoweth the secret of the Universe. My music is my thought, and my thought is my emotion. The deeper I dive into the ocean of feeling, the more beautiful are the pearls I bring forth in the form of melodies. 'My Music is my Religion'. Therefore, worldly success can never be a proper price for it and my sole object in music is to achieve perfection".

Truly these are the words of a Sufi mystic, and these words fully reveal the man and his art. The reply impressed the Nizam so deeply that he named him as "the modern Tansen"! He

also presented him with an emerald ring and a purse full of gold coins.

Inayat Khan began to have an increasing number of friends and admirers among sages, Fakirs, and Sufi mystics like Maulana Hashmi, Sirdar Dastur Hoshang, Maulana Khair, Maulana Khair-ul Mubin—all of whom detected in Inayat's eyes "the sparkling genius of a mystic". Later on, he met his Murshid Maulana Sayed Mohammad Aby Hashim Madani at whose behest, Inayat proceeded to the West for the twin purpose of spreading Sufism and popularising Indian classical music in the West. Before going abroad, he had acquired considerable proficiency in Western music from his maternal uncle Prof. Alauddin Khan Pathan of Baroda, a highly qualified musician with many covetable degrees in Western music. With his proficiency in 3 systems of music — Western, Hindustani, and Karnatak—with his command over so many languages, and his noble and charming ways, Inayat Khan was excellently equipped for his chosen mission. In September 1910 he reached U.S.A. accompanied by his brother Mahboob Khan and cousin Aly Khan.

It was while he was giving a Veena recital at the Rama-krishna Ashram in San Francisco that he met, and fell in love with, Miss Ora Ray Baker—"a sensitive, fragile, feylike American girl" who was the niece of Mrs. Mary Eddy Baker, the founder of the Christian Science Movement. They got married in Paris, and Inayat Khan rechristened her as "Sharada Ameena Begum". In one of the later photographs, Inayat Khan in a long loose robe, and with a flowing white beard, looks a bit like Poet Tagore. His wife, clad in a sari in the Parsi style looks serene, gentle, and charming. Her head is covered with the "pallu" in true Indian style. Their elder son Vilayat Khan married an English lady, the second son Hidayat Khan married a Dutch lady, and Inayat Khan's brother and cousin also married Dutch girls, and all of them have become citizens of Holland. The greatest tragedy in the family was the brutal political assassination of Inayat Khan's beloved daughter Noor, a highly sensitive, talented, and clairvoyant girl, who had later become a secret agent working for the French Resistance Movement against the Nazis. She was captured by the Gestapo,

tortured and brutally killed in the Dachau Concentration Camp on 13-9-1944. One of the witnesses of this sadistic torture-chamber wrote later:- "What happened was terrible. The girl was a bloody mass. The only word she uttered before they shot her through her head was— "Liberte"—". Thus tragically ended the young life of the vivacious Noor Inayat Khan (1914 to 1943) at the age of 29. In the words of Ravidala Shenoy, "Noor was the only woman to win a posthumous George Cross and the CROIX de Guerre". Inayat Khan was lucky that he died many years before this terrible tragedy.

From 1910 to 1926, Inayat Khan's life was a saga of constant touring all over Europe, U.K and repeated trips to U.S.A. Everywhere he gave an incredibly large number of lectures on Indian philosophy, mysticism, and sufism, and lecture-demonstrations on Indian music. His impressive personality, speeches and music won for him a vast circle of friends and throngs of admirers. In 1912 he met Poet Tagore and Fox Strangways (author of a well-known book on Indian Music) in England. In Russia he made friends with Count Serge Tolstoy. (son of the great Tolstoy who later became a representative of the Sufi Order.) Regarding the reception he got in Russia, Inayat Khan wrote:- "The warmth that came from the heart of the people kept us warm in that cold country". In many places, his lectures on Sufism were published as books like "*The Inner Life*". In 1920 he established his Sufi Headquarters in Geneva. In his very first visit to Holland in 1921 Inayat was completely won over by the people of Holland about whom he said:- "Though the Dutch are proud and self-willed, I saw in them love of the Spiritual—They are straightforward, most inclined towards religion, lovers of justice, and seekers after Truth".

In 1923 he met Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy who was in charge of the Boston Art Museum, and he met also many other famous personalities. His music and his lectures were so greatly admired that "people thronged around him acclaiming him as their Hazrat, and calling themselves as his *Mureeds*". In 1925 Mr Ford expressed his admiration by saying:- "If you had been a businessman, you certainly would have been a success. But I am glad that you are as you are". When the

Sufi societies started by him in England, Holland, Germany, and U.S.A. were thriving in all these places, Sufi Inayat Khan felt a deep urge to revisit his Motherland where he hoped he would have some respite from this constant round of engagements and perpetual throngs of admirers around him.

Looking forward to some weeks of rest and relaxation in India, he arrived in Delhi on the first of November, 1926. But his fame had preceded him into his country. Therefore, he was once again crowded with admirers and pressing invitations to give lectures and recitals. By 1927 he was tired and exhausted with overwork. He contracted pneumonia and died in Delhi in 1927 in the Tilak Lodge on the banks of the river Yamuna.

Thus ended the busy life of Sufi Inayat Khan who did pioneering work in the West in his mission of propagating Indian music and Sufism all over the West. Through his lectures and demonstrations, he revealed to the Westerners a rich hidden Indian world of endless treasures, spiritual and artistic. With his varied accomplishments, his rare qualities of head and heart, and his noble manners, Inayat Khan was one of the best "Cultural Ambassadors" that India has had. But since he spent the best part of his life from the age of 28 till the last year of his life abroad, very little is known about him in his own. What he achieved in the West in the short span of 45 years is really amazing. His devoted wife Sharada Ameena Begum died in Paris in 1949.

Raja Bhaiya Poochwale

Raja Bhaiya belonged to a family which consisted originally of Zamindars, and later, of Government officials-cum-astrologers and musicians. Originally hailing from Satara district, Raja Bhaiya's ancestors had worked in the Peshwa Durbar. Later on, they came to Bundelkhand along with Shri Shivrambhau Saheb, father-in-law of the Rani of Jhansi. When they were gifted with the Jagir of Pooch, the family got the surname *Poochwale*, and the surname sticks even though they lost all their property during the riots of 1857 and had to migrate to Gwalior for a living ! It is said that Raja Bhaiya's grandfather who was an eminent astrologer, and a favourite of the late Sayaji Rao Maharaj, imparted a great deal of his astrological scholarship to the young Raja Bhaiya whose real name was Balakrishna.

Balakrishna was born in Gwalior in August 1852 in a Maharashtrian home that was blessed in wealth and culture. He was especially lucky because he was surrounded with the love of his grand-parents, his father, Shri Anandraoji, and of his uncle, Shri Ganpatraoji. The grandfather and the uncle took care to sow admirable qualities like piety, humility and refinement in the young boy's character. But while yet a baby, Balakrishna had a very great misfortune in the form of a paralytic attack of the lower limbs which left him bed-ridden for (what seemed then) the rest of his life. The grandfather took the child on a pilgrimage. It must have been pathetic to hear the young boy praying before each idol : "Oh God please give me my feet."

What followed was a miracle of faith. In a few days young Balakrishna was able to walk, although with a limp.

Raja Bhaiya's father had taken some training in Sitar from Wamanrao Chiklikar. Whenever the father sat for his practice, the boy would leave his play and sit there in rapt attention—a clear indication of his inborn love for the art. His grand-father also was a genuine music-lover. The boy never missed the learned musical discussions between the two, and clamoured to be taken to music-sittings and discussions in the famous "Bhaiyaji Mandir". Watching the young boy sitting wide-awake throughout the night listening raptly to the all-night soirees, well-wishers of the family advised Raja Bhaiya's uncle that the boy's great love for music should be encouraged fully. Thus, along with his elementary training in Hindi, Marathi and English, his musical training also was started, and the first Guru was Shri Baldevji—a disciple of Prof. Mehdi Hussain. Raja Bhaiya also had the great fortune of being able to listen to the galaxy of unforgettable vocal and instrumental musicians who flourished then.

Raja Bhaiya's family once so rich and affluent, began to undergo many reversals of fortune. With the death of Raja Bhaiya's mother in 1951, the luck of the family seemed to have run out. Due to financial stringencies, the boy's musical training had to be continued for a time by his father himself, who taught him to play on the harmonium. Later on, he was put under the tutelage of Shri Wamanbuwa Phaltankar. Wamanbuwa entrusted Raja Bhaiya's training to his eldest son, Shri Mamabuwa, (Sriram Sastry). Shri Mamabuwa was not only an eminent Dhrupadiya and composer, but he had undergone good Khayal training from Prof. Nissar Hussain Khan himself. Raja Bhaiya soon became a great favourite of his. The guru trained him systematically and thoroughly for Khayal singing and also showed his great love by teaching him all his new compositions, such as *taranas*, *sargams*, *Padas*, and so on.

Laskar had many amateur clubs at that time. Inspired by the great dramas of the famous "Kirloskar Sangeet Natak Mandali", "the Shinde Club" of Gwalior plunged into a furore of dramatic activity. Raja Bhaiya was chosen as the harmonium player of the theatre and very soon he achieved a

great reputation. The Club was a great relief to him because his family was quite impoverished at that time. For want of a house to live in, all the members of the family had to go and live with their respective in-laws and relatives. But the Club was a short-lived affair. When it fluttered out, Raja Bhaiya was in great difficulty. However, thanks to the kindness of his loving guru, his problems were solved forever. The guru, Sri Mamabuwa successfully persuaded the childless brother of Raja Bhaiya's mother-in-law to adopt him as a son. Very soon, he was chosen as the *harmonist* to accompany the late Sumant Madhavrao Maharaj, an honour which he retained till the latter's death. But the favour of the Raja's family continued to shine on Raja Bhaiya. He became Shri Jivajirao Scindia's Harmonium teacher and the Princess Kamalaraja Saheba's music (vocal) teacher.

Meanwhile, Raja Bhaiya continued his own music-training under both Sri Mamabuwa and his father Wamanbuwa until their death. It would not be wrong to say that Raja Bhaiya had by then acquired the entire musical wealth of their Gharana, running into hundreds of compositions. In 1907, he happened to hear a gramophone record which created such a deep impression on his mind, that he was suddenly obsessed with the desire to become a disciple of the singer. The gramophone was in its infancy in those days. In order to hear a record, the listener had to put on the earphones for which the rental charge was one anna per song. Raja Bhaiya managed to collect eight annas and listened to the record eight times. The singer was Shankarrao Pandit—the reputed representative of the Gwalior Gharana, and the eminent disciple of Ustad Nissar Hussain khan. The song was a thumri beginning with the word "Krishnamurari". Through the kindness of Shri Kashinath Pant Mule, Raja Bhaiya was accepted as a pupil by the respected guru. During the first few years, the guru taught him nothing and showed complete indifference. But bye and bye the pupil's utter devotion to the guru, extraordinary powers of love and industry, and dedication to the art thawed the tough heart of the famous guru. Then followed rewarding years when Raja Bhaiya learnt hundreds of precious traditional songs of the gharana, and fully imbibed the rich gayaki

of his guru. For years, he continued his daily practice of ten to twelve hours, until he fully imbibed Sri Krishnarao Pandit's rich Gwalior gayaki.

When Pandit Bhatkhande started his Music College in Gwalior, his natural choice for Principalship was Raja Bhaiya. But the selfless artist preferred to pass on the honour to his guru's son. Actually, however, it was Raja Bhaiya who shouldered all the duties of the principal. No amount of praise will be adequate for the great help that Raja Bhaiya rendered to Pandit Bhatkandeji in the work of rendering numerous traditional compositions in notation. 40% of the songs included in the KRAMIK series were given to the author (Pandit Bhatkhande) by Raja Bhaiya, and Pandit Bhatkhande taught him a number of new ragas and 'cheezens'. Until they met in 1917, Raja Bhaiya had remained merely an ardent student of the practical aspect of music. After his inspiring meeting with the Chaturpandit, he became a research scholar deeply involved in the work that the great savant was doing. Recalling his close contacts with Pandit Bhatkandeji (who was addressed as Rao Saheb, by many of his admirers), Raja Bhaiya said in a talk broadcast over all India Radio, Lucknow :

"Rao Saheb was a really great and ideal personality. He served the cause of music with everything he had—body, mind, and wealth.

I consider myself lucky for having become his disciple, and close associate in his mission of propagating classical music. His devotion to music has really inspired us."

By his own selfless devotion and help, Raja Bhaiya won the Chaturpandit's love and blessings. The two were a great mutual inspiration. Even after Panditji's death, Raja Bhaiya continued to work on the same lines. His books, such as *Thumri Tarangini*, *Naadopasana*, *Tanamailika* (in five parts, and his *Dhrupad and Dhamar Gayan* in several volumes contain numerous rare and precious traditional songs spread out for all time to come. Today his disciples are scattered all over the country. A more magnanimous teacher was hard to find. Although he acquired the art through many hardships, Raja Bhaiya was ever willing to pass it on to students who were talented. Several of his disciples were brought to Lucknow

and appointed as teachers in the Bhatkhande Music College. Among them there are many who deserve special mention for the services they have rendered to music as dedicated gurus. Foremost among these is Pt. Govind Narayan Natu who has always followed the ideals set before him by Raja Bhaiya who led a simple life dedicated to music. Pandit Natu has devoted more than 50 years of his life to imparting classical music training to generations of students and has been deservedly awarded the Fellowship of the Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Academy in recognition of his great services to music. Shri M V. Kalvint, a teacher once in the Music College, Lucknow, and now in Varanasi, has been another recipient of an award from the Akademy. Shri P.N. Chinchore (Indira Sangeet Vidyalay Khairagarh), Shri V.J. Joshi and many other pupils of Raja Bhaiya have continued their guru's work. Special mention must be made of Pt. G.N. Natu's excellent compositions, several volumes of which have already been published.

Shri Chinchore did a splendid job in compiling the voluminous Bhatkhande Smriti Grantha in 1966.

Besides, Raja Bhaiya served music as an examiner of many Universities, and as a member of several Music Boards. During his annual trips to the Music College of Lucknow as an Examiner, he used to stay with his friend Dr. S.N. Ratanjan-kar. Often he used to give demonstrations in the College. We, the students of those times had the privilege of hearing him many times. He was a real "Gharanedar" musician, and his style reflected all the beauty and dignity of the true Gwalior gharana which lays prime emphasis on lucid and correct interpretation of the entire Sahitya (word-contents) of the songs, systematic badhat (elaboration) of the composition with beautiful alaps, bol-alaps and varieties of taans and bol-taans. I still remember the purity of Raga and the neatness with which he used to render the mere outlines of the *asthayi* and *antara* (the 2 main stanzas of a Khayal). There are many rebel-musicians today who just catch hold of the Mukhda (the first line or phrase of a song) and dismiss the rest of the Khayal as inconsequential. For them, the Mukhda, is a mere peg to hang all their embellishments, and they go on repeating the Mukhda ad infinitum. Those who have heard Raja Bhaiya,

Krishnarao Pandit, Anant Manohar Joshi and others are aware of the real beauty of the Gwalior gharana of Khayalbadhat.

In the year 1942 when Raja Bhaiya reached the age of 60, a special Mandal was formed by his numerous disciples and admirers. *The Poochwale Shashtiabdapoorthy Mahotsav Mandal* published and dedicated a specially compiled volume entitled "Shri Raja Bhaiya Ki Nadopasana," and a purse was presented to him as a token in appreciation of his services to music, his greatness and generosity as a teacher, his lofty character and simple living. In one of the addresses presented to him, an admirer (Shri Sadashiv Raghunath Bhagat) wrote.

"Your family is not confined to Gwalior only—it is spread out all over India because your worthy pupils are propagating music in numerous cities."

It is gratifying to note that Raja Bhaiya's son, *Shri Bala Saheb Poochwale* is occupying the chair of his distinguished father, as the Principal of the Madho Sangeet Vidyalaya, Gwalior, and that Bala Saheb has maintained the purity of his Gwalior style. He is an adept in Khayal, Tappa and Tarana.

In his special address on the occasion of Raja Bhaiya's, *Shashtiabdapoorthy* (60th Birthday) Dr. S.N. Ratanjankar spoke of his long association with, and his great admiration for, Raja Bhaiya as a man and as a teacher :—

"Once holding a clerical post, Raja Bhaiya occupies such a high position of honour in the music world now. But he remains the same simple, humble, warm, dignified, virtuous, noble, helpful and compassionate person. I have never heard him talking ill of any musician. He has no vices at all. His personal life has been a model of virtue, goodness and integrity. As a musician, he is great. I prostrate at the feet of this great musician and saintly personality."

This is the tribute from one great and good musician to another.

In April 1956, the last month of Raja Bhaiya's long life, the Government of India decided to recognize his life long service to music by bestowing the Presidential Award on him. But the decision came a little, too late, for, this selfless and humble musician did not live long enough to receive this prestigious award in person.

Chapter 18

Ustad Yusuf Ali Khan

A few months prior to his death, Ustad Yusuf Ali Khan told me in an interview : "It is my firm belief that a person born with artistic talents can flower into a full-fledged artiste, only by hard, long years of devoted service to one's guru and of intensive dedication to the art. This is true of all arts, especially music. '*Agar shagird Khidmat se ustad ka dil haath me lega, to ustad dil se ilm denge.*' An Ustad would prefer to pass on his 'ilm' to a devoted disciple, rather than to his own son who does not serve the guru. I can convince you of this statement of mine by telling you about my own life and musical training. Let me tell you something about those great masters who moulded a plain Yusuf into Ustad Yusuf Ali Khan Sitariya....."

Yusuf Ali was born in Lucknow in 1887. His father Bahadur Ali Khan who owned a musical instruments shop at La Touche Road (Lucknow) not only played on the sitar but also manufactured excellent instruments. Because of his utterly simple nature, people nicknamed him as "Bhondu Khan." He had received sound training in instrumental and vocal music from Ustad Azam Khan Kalpiwale who belonged to the *Seniya Gharana*. Ustad Azam Khan was descended from the line of Nirmol Shah a famous Vainik of Jaipur. His chief disciple Bhadah Khan (nineteenth century) had migrated from Jaipur, and after years of wandering, had ultimately settled down in Kalpi under the protection of the Rana of Kalpi who was himself a fine Dhrupad-singer and Vainik, and a patron of music. As Bhadah Khan's son Alam Khan was born in Kalpi, their musical lineage began to be known as *Kalpiwala Gharana*. Actually, this was an offshoot of the 'Seniya' *Gharana* which

laid stress on *Beenkari* (Veena-playing) as well as on Dhrupad-training.

Azam Khan's sons Abdul Ghani Khan and Murawwat Khan were born in Khajurgaon after Azam Khan had become a court-musician under the patronage of the music-loving Rana of Khajurgaon. Both of them achieved popularity as instrumentalists and as Dhrupadiyas.

The promise shown by Yusuf even as a young Sitariya of tender years pleased Ustad Azam Khan so much that he took the boy with him to Khajurgaon and started giving him systematic training in veena and Dhrupads. This continued till Azam Khan's death. About this period of his life, Yusuf Ali once said : "My father put me and my two brothers Khurshid Ali and Gurwat Ali in school. My brothers were wise enough to undergo schooling along with their musical training. But I was such a fool ! I clearly remember what an aversion I used to have for studies and how I used to play truant and harass the Moulvis so much that I was given up as incorrigible. Alas ! had I realised the value of education in those carefree boyhood-days, I would not have lost that golden opportunity to get educated. In the field of musical studies, however, I excelled my brothers. Father put all three of us under the training of Abdul Ghani Khan (son of Azam Khan). Right from the start, he had a specially soft corner for me. When I was just 13, he requested my father to let him adopt me as his son. Thus at the young age of 13 I had to sacrifice my home for my Guru's, and this became my second home. I served my Ustad so devotedly that he began to love me more than he loved his own sons ! Both he and his brother Murawwat Khan were of a saintly and simple disposition. Religion and music were their passions in life. In the 13 or more years that I spent with my Ustad, my art was polished and my life disciplined properly. My life was completely devoted to serving my guru and practising my music. *Apne ko mitaye tabhi riyaz hota hai.*

Describing the gruelling years of *Taaleem* that he underwent, Yusuf Ali continued:—"Every night at 10.30, I had to start my *riyaz* and continue till 4 in the morning under the vigilant eyes of my Ustad. Lest I nod off to sleep, a tuft of my hair

was firmly tied to the *Khaprel*. After 4 a.m. *numaaz*, breakfast, then sleep till 2.30 or 3 p.m.

The Ustad was also very particular that his pupil should develop a robust athletic physique. For this, Yusuf Ali had to draw out "50 to 60 bucketfulls of water from the well every day" and learn wrestling from professionals in the *akhada* (gymnasium) every evening. In spite of all the heavy work and strenuous training, he used to be quite happy because of the Ustad's love and blessings. The tragic death of a son of Ghani Khan by drowning in an accident in the Ganges completely broke his heart. Thereafter, Murawwat Khan continued Yusuf's training.

When Yusuf Ali's father Bhondu Khan died, Murawwat Khan sent Yusuf with all his blessings to Lucknow so that the latter could look after his father's musical instruments shop. Here in Lucknow, he was lucky enough to come into close contact with the great Kalka-Binda Kathak maestros of Lucknow. Their house in *Jhaulal Ka Pul* used to be the magnetic centre that attracted all the musical celebrities who lived in or visited Lucknow. Kalka and Binda liked Yusuf Ali very much and gave him numerous chances to perform in the distinguished musical gatherings at their residence. There he also got many chances to hear reputed musicians of the time.

Although all his early training had been in Veena and Dhru-pad, Yusuf Ali Khan was ordered to change over to the Sitar by his guru who developed a superstitious belief that all gifted *vainiks* died young. However, the sound early training in Veena and Dhrupad enriched his 'Sitarbaaj.' While in his twenties, he gave a successful Sitar recital in Delhi in the presence of a large number of professionals who had been invited for the wedding of a rich Nawab. After this he began to get regular bookings in conferences and concerts and the radio, specially from his "parent-station" Lucknow. His father's shop in La Touche Road had always been the meeting place of great musicians. Right from his childhood, therefore, Yusuf Ali had lived in the company of musicians. This was continued when he began to manage his father's shop after the latter's death. One of his brothers became a drawing-master (in the Jubilee

College) while the other brother Gurbat Ali became a good Tabla-player.

One of the memories that Yusuf Ali treasured and frequently described with pride was the fact that he along with his tabla-playing brother Gurbat Ali were sent 'to London to perform during the 'Coronation Festival Exhibition in 1910. He impressed the music-lovers not only by his Sitar-recital but also by giving a demonstration on Sitar-making. He used to say that a beautifully-carved Sitar that he manufactured then is still kept in a collection in London.

On his return from London, he joined AIR Lucknow as a Staff Artist, but after a few months, service, he resigned as he "wanted to be free and independent". For many years Murawwat Khan and Abdul Ghani Khan had been the court musicians of the Raja Saheb of Chandapur. Such was their intense loyalty to their patron that after the latter's death, they gave up performing. Wherever they were invited they would send their favourite pupil Yusuf saying that "Yusuf is our musical heir in every respect." In 1958 he was honoured with the award of "Padma Shree". About this he used to say: "I cannot express the overwhelming feeling of encouragement that I got from this coveted Presidential award. The Sangeet Natak Akademy thereby inspired me to serve my country as best as I could. The Bhatkhande College gave me a wonderful chance by appointing me as a Sitar-teacher on their Staff consisting of many eminent musicians and teachers like Pt. S.N. Ratanankar Pt. G.N. Natu, Pt. Sakharain, Shri Sakhawat Hussain, Shri V.G. Jog, Shri M.V. Kalyan and others. During the many years that I worked as a teacher in the college, I must have taught hundreds of students and given numerous recitals."

Among his more well-known disciples may be mentioned the names of Ilyas Khan (now on the staff of the Bhatkhande College), Jaffar Khan (now in Pakistan) and Mohammad Ismail (Yusuf Ali's son who is a Staff-Artiste of All India Radio, Lucknow). He had also given Sitar-training to his younger son Rahat Ali. Yusuf Ali composed hundreds of *gats* for the Sitar in traditional Ragas. When we asked him why he never took to new ragas, his reply was, "*Puraani baaton se hi fursat nahin hai.*" Training in Dhrupad singing was according to him

indispensable ("laazmi hai"). His own Sitar-baaj was characterised by purity of ragas and coloured by his systematic early training in Veena and Dhrupad. He used to play *Maseet khani Razakhani* as well as *Poorab-baj gaats*. His "three-point" advice to students of music was: (i) find a good, sincere and eminent Ustad. (2) serve him with all your heart, and win over his love and blessings; (3) Forget yourself in your practice (*riyaaz me apne aapko mita dena*).

Yusuf Ali figured in many National Programmes and remained a regular broadcaster from the Lucknow-Allahabad Stations of AIR till the fag end of his life. Even after he had become feeble with old age he never missed any radio-programme of his. During one of his last visits to the studios for a broadcast he fell into a very nostalgic mood:— "What great contemporaries I have heard ! I cannot forget the Sitar-recitals of Ustad Amir Khan and Imdad Khan, and the Veena of Murad Khan. They used to move me to tears ("ansoo barasaye"). But most of my outstanding contemporaries are gone alas! Although I still manage to come for my broadcasts, I feel very weak now and before long, I think I shall have to join them (contemporaries) in another world".

On 14th October 1962 Yusuf Ali called his sons Ismail and Rahat to his bedside, blessed them both, said his prayers at sunset-time, and peacefully passed away.

His recordings are broadcast from Lucknow now and then. A National programme based on his recordings in the archives, was broadcast once.

Chapter 19

Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the world of Hindustani music has been dominated by many colossi who have not only left their lasting impact on our music, but also left for us a rich legacy of *Shishyas*. Sarod was brought into India only 250 or 300 years ago, but the genii of a few outstanding artistes have already brought to this complicated instrument a perfection that seems difficult to surpass. Those of us who have been able to hear Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan and Ustad Alauddin Khan in person are exceptionally fortunate because they were two of the greatest instrumental maestros in living memory, and their contributions to the Sarod have been gigantic. Both have given to their art some thing of their genius and interpretation but their *taleem* was from the same source—the famous *Beenkar gharana* of Ustad Wazir Khan of Rampur. Equally great as artistes, they were utterly different from each other in their family and artistic backgrounds, temperaments, and personalities. Dr Narayana Menon sums up their contrasts in the following assessment:—“Ustad Alauddin Khan was the cultivated intellect who held the wealth of his enormous, accumulated wisdom and repertoire as a sacred legacy. As a person, he was shy, reticent, and introspective like a saint, though he could be a terror as a teacher. Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan was a poet, an intuitive artist (for all his depth of understanding of the laws of music) and a law unto himself. He was a born extrovert, who held his head high, brooked no nonsense from any quarters, and walked the earth like a Renaissance Prince”.

Although disciples of the same Ustad (Wazir Khan), each evolved his own typical style, and had his own philosophy of

life. So far, all the instrumental virtuosi of Hindustani music have been tracing their musical lineage to Tansen. But henceforth, I feel that all the great (string) instrumental artistes of today should trace their musical lineage to either of these two. Admirers galore, and pupillary descendants of these two outstanding Ustads have a tendency to imagine that the two artistes must have been mutually jealous rivals. But really speaking, they were great mutual admirers. Hafiz Ali Khan used to refer to Alauddin Khan as "*Dada*" and say that "*Dada*" was the most accomplished musician throughout India. Once he told his prominent disciple Birendra Kishore Roy Choudhry.—"Dada has learnt so much of so many things that he is an ocean of musical knowledge. Even the tremendous sacrifice that he made to learn music passes common understanding. It takes a lot of insight to realise the quality of his mastery, his mind, his genius"

Alauddin Khan Saheb, on his part, used to be all admiration for Hafiz Ali Khan Saheb's musical wizardry and his great traditional background of music. He used to say : "I am only a porter in music. My hands are those of a peasant. But Hafiz Saheb is the artiste whose fingers can produce all the melodies on earth. God has blessed him profusely. His sweet music brings tears to my eyes."

Both were kindred spirits united in *Sadhana*, great *Sadhaks* who could bring tears into the listeners' eyes. Hafiz Ali Khan had many advantages over Alauddin Khan because he was a born musician, "a musician born with the very pulse-beats of music in his artistic soul." He was the great grandson of a sturdy Pathan, Ghulam Bandegi Khan of Bangesh, who left his rugged native land of Afghanistan and came to India more than 250 years ago armed with a *Rabab*. A soldier and equestrian by profession, he found employment in the army of Maharaja Vishwanath Singh of Rewa. The Maharaja was a great patron of music and a skilled musician himself, whose court was filled with many famous musicians. When he found out that Ghulam Bandegi Khan was teaching his little son Ghulam Ali Khan to play on the *Rabab*, he was impressed by the artistic talent of the boy whom he soon took under his care. Ghulam Ali Khan was given training in Dhrupad-singing

and had the good fortune of also receiving training from the famed Ustads Pyar Khan and Jaffar Khan--both distinguished Rabab players, and direct descendants of Mian Tansen.

To Ghulam Ali Khan goes the credit for modifying the difficult *Rabab* into what we now know as the *Sarod*. He achieved this transformation by changing *gut* strings for steel-made strings, wooden plates for steel plates and adding a few more strings for *Tarabs* and *Chikari*. The name "Sarod" was possibly derived from the Arabic "*Sahrood*" or the Persian "*Sarood*", meaning "music".

Ghulam Ali Khan became a court-musician of Gwalior, and gave fine training to his son Nanhe Khan. Later on, Nanhe Khan also became a court-musician of Gwalior and continued the Dhrupad and Rababiya traditions of his family.

Born into such a family, Hafiz Ali Khan had music in his very soul and blood, and the versatile training he received was something incredible. Early in life, he was initiated into the art by his father Nanhe Khan and later, he was taught by his uncles Asghar Ali Khan and Murad Ali Khan. About his musical training, Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan mentioned in an interview published in *LIPKA* in November 1972 : "My father was able to teach me only till I was about 19 or 20 when he passed away. By then I had begun to play fairly well—but my thirst for knowledge and more knowledge was like a burning fire, it dominated my life, my thinking ; I did great *riyaz*. You, children of today, may perhaps think it rather hard-hearted of her, but my mother used to see me sit down for my daily *riyaz* at night, and at dawn, she herself came to permit me to stop. She would bring me a steaming bowl of rich soup-Yakhni-to drink after a whole night of laborious *riyaz*—".

In order to master the Dhrupad style of singing, which is the mother of all techniques, Hafiz Ali went to Vrindavan where he sat at the feet of Pt Chukhalalji and Pt. Ganeshilalji—two great exponents of the pure, pristine *Daggur Vani* of Swami Haridasji, and learnt hundreds of Dhrupads and Dhamsars from them. And then he got the chance of his lifetime to learn under the great Ustad Wazir Khan of Rampur, who was noted in the whole of India as the most deeply learned purist and a very exacting Ustad who seldom agreed to accept

a pupil. To be accepted by such a guru, and to become a *ganda-bandh* (sacred thread binding guru and shishya) was a great honour.

Hafiz Ali received profound knowledge and much affection from Ustad Wazir Khan—"a scion of the reputed Beenkar Gharana of Raja Misrichand" (son-in-law of Tansen). His all round training was complete when he polished the *Thumri-ang* under the inspiring guidance of the unforgettable Ganpatrao Bhaiya of Gwalior, the great exponent of Thumri, and unrivalled wizard of the harmonium. Amjad Ali says : "The sweetness of my father's Thumri-playing may be attributed partly to his own aesthetic sense, and to the great influence upon him of the harmonium —wizard, Bhaiya Saheb Ganpatrao of Gwalior".

From Ustad Amir Khan, the famous Sitariya, he took up the Jaipur style of *Zamzama* and introduced it into his Sarod-baaj.

Few musicians could have had such an extensive training in music. "The collation of this multifaceted knowledge and his own inner creativity produced the musical genius of Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan." He is acclaimed for the purity of his *ragas*, his virile yet delicate handling of the Sarod, and the profundity of his musical expression.

When he took up a raga which could be treated best in the Dhrupad style, he brought to it a strength, and a robust earthly quality to his tone, his *alap* and *jod* were enriched by his Dhrupad-training ; when he chose a raga suitable for lighter and romantic treatment, he would "woo the Sarod, as it were, coaxing out of it tones which were ethereal." Rarely has an instrumentalist combined in himself "the robustness of the Dhrupad with the *gayaki* of Khayal and the delicate subtleties of Thumri."

Very few people know what a fine singer Hafiz Ali Khan was, and what a grand melodious singing voice he had. His friend, admirer and favourite Table-accompanist in Calcutta, *Sri Raichand Eoral*, has extolled the Ustads "immaculate voice, the like of which I have never heard among instrumentalists. In moments of inspiration, he would burst into song, and many people felt that had he not dedicated himself to the

Sarod, he would have become a great vocal maestro. Anyway, his vocal accomplishments enabled him to infuse the subtleties of vocal music into *Tantrakari* or instrumental music. His repertoire of *Dhrupads*, *Dhamars*, *Khayals*, and *Thumris* was enormous. But as he hailed from a family of traditional Sarod players, he chose the Sarod as the vehicle for his artistic expression. The Ustad held the strong view that mastery of vocal music is essential for the shaping of a really good instrumentalist because "a man who cannot sing, also cannot sustain the deep-seated turmoil in his heart. When the heart is on fire, the fingers automatically reach out for the apt notes."

Those who know this aspect of Hafiz Ali Khan's genius, are not surprised that he has cast his favourite youngest son Amjad Ali in the same mould. Amjad can sing a *Dhrupad*, a *Khayal* or a *Thumri* melodiously, and play on the tabla if needed, besides, being a master on the Sarod.

As a man, the first impact that Hafiz Ali Khan had on people was that of his towering and extremely handsome personality. He was tall, massively built, very fair-complexioned, with a well-trimmed beard, and large eyes full of wisdom and authority. With such handsome looks, impeccable manners, unfailing courtesy or *tehzeeb*, noble bearing, amiable disposition, and refined conversation (*adaab*), he was a veritable charmer.

It was Maharaj Pradyot Kumar Tagore, and Bhupendra Kumar Ghosh who first invited Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan to Calcutta in connection with the pageants arranged in honour of the visit of the Prince of Wales. The Maharaja of Gwalior, the then patron of Hafiz Ali Khan, must have been only too pleased to send "his brilliant asset" to Calcutta. The music world of Calcutta was immediately "shaken out of the complacency that was beginning to settle down on the musical world of Bengal." Raichand Boral writes about this impact : "I knew I was in the presence of a phenomenon. We were suddenly confronted with a new genius who almost rudely banished our smugness. The style, the technique, and the typical approach to *rasa* was something unheard of here. Ustad Hafiz Ali introduced into this city a *tarparan* of great intricacy, organisation and balance."

It was roundabout 1918 that the Ustad went to stay in the house of the famous Boral family of Calcutta—Shri Manmota Nath Ghose (President Suresh Sangeet Samsad) confessed that at the very first sight, he was charmed by the rare handsome personality of the Ustad, and later on, by his superb art. “His veritable *darbari* (courtly) looks, went well with the exquisite nature of his music. Coupled with his handsome appearance, was his faultless style of behaviour, controlled speech (*adaab*), and warm words all similar to those of his great contemporary - *Aftab-e-Mausiqui* Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb. Both belonged to the courtly era of gentlemen-musicians.”

I had many opportunities to hear Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan in private soirees and public concerts. For the initiated audiences, he would play the dignified *alap* of Dhrupad-style, or of the Sursingar style. But when performing before a lay audience, he would also play in the romantic Thumri *ang*. And to his pupils, he was the archetypal Dhrupadiya so that their lessons would never lack in seriousness and profundity. Like all true artistes, he was a man of many musical moods. When he was not in a proper mood, he would sometimes play in a casual manner starting with a brief alap and a medium tempo *gat*. He could afford to do so because he had already achieved all that could be achieved in the field, and honours and awards galore had already been showered on him such as the Presidential award, the Padma Bhushan, a Doctorate and so on. But when he was facing connoisseurs or a discerning audience, he would play like one inspired and take your breath away with his rare artistry. Immaculately dressed, with an embroidered cap or a colourful turban on his noble head, dignified in bearing, he looked every inch an aristocrat—a Moghul courtier. With a few strokes, Hafiz Ali could vividly portray the main features of a *raga*. Sri Radhika Mohan Moitra, a reputed Sarodiya of the same *gharana* says : “The Ustad’s style was inimitable, both in delineation and content. His handling of the instrument was superb as if he was fondling a child with the loving caresses of a mother. His *Mukha vilas* (facial expressions) typifying the different contours of his melodic and rhythmic variations was a rare treat.”

As for his taiyari (speed) on the Sarod, one unforgettable episode in his life is enough to prove the point, although the Ustad would have preferred to erase it from his memory for ever if possible. Once the Ustad was giving an inspired Sarod recital in a private soiree in the house of his friends, the Borals, who were one of the reputed connoisseur-families of Calcutta. The Ustad had been playing vigorously for well over 4 hours with Shambhu Singh accompanying him on the Pakhawaj. At last, he ended his long recital after raising it to a crescendo of speed, and gently put down his Sarod. The cognoscenti of Calcutta were applauding his fine recital with deep appreciation when the Tabla-player Darshan Singh came forward with a peevish demand that the Ustad should now play to his (Darshan Singh's) Tabla-accompaniment. The Ustad was quite tired and unwilling to resume the recital. But when Darshan Singh peevishly provoked him with a hint of challenge, Hafiz Ali Khan decided to prove his stamina. Picking up his Sarod, he began playing in the same tremendous tempo at which he had ended his recital a few minutes earlier. His *riyaz* was at its peak, and he could play thunderous rhythms at a breathtaking pace. Darshan Singh began with great gusto, but hardly 30 minutes had passed, when he slumped forward on his Tabla and died ! So great was the shock and so deep his sorrow that Hafiz Ali Khan could neither sleep nor eat for many days after that. While narrating this tragic incident that occurred in his own house, Raichand Boral wrote : "Never have I seen so much pain in a man's eyes as when I looked into the sad, reddened eyes of Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan."

For a sensitive artiste, with a devout character and a merciful nature, this was indeed a most shattering experience.

Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan's favourite percussion accompanists were Parbat Singh and Peare Babu on the Pakhawaj or Abid Hussain and Raichand Boral on the Table. But of course, he was used to the Tabla accompaniment of all the maestros of the time such as Thirakawa Saheb, Kanthe Maharaj and others. Sometimes, when moved by the sheer purity of notes and beauty of a raga, tears would stream out of the Ustad's eyes, and the accompanist would be in a sort of trance. But

this was nothing unusual for the Ustad whose theory was :— “Only when the heart weeps, can music derive its life.”

For him, music was a form of prayer, and a glorification of the Maker. Amjad Ali clarifies this musical credo of his father : “Abba used to say that one must try to create magnificent music because any thing less than one’s best would not be good enough to offer at the feet of one’s Lord. One’s music can get *taseer*, only if one creates it as an offering to God.”

Such being his musical credo, it is no wonder that Hafiz Ali’s musical art had *taseer*—that indescribable quality which has impact on the listener’s very soul.

The Ustad gave thorough musical *taleem* to all his 3 sons—Mubarak Ali, Rahmat Ali and Amjad Ali Khan and to his nephew Ahmad Ali Khan. He also instilled into them a pride in their lineage. However, it is Amjad Ali who has really inherited his father’s rare good looks, artistic brilliance, and charming manners. He has the added advantage of the polish that modern education gives. This is a great asset to Amjad Ali who is constantly travelling in this country and abroad giving recitals. Amjad has in him his father’s handsome looks though not his gigantic Pathan personality. With his dignity of bearing, the same *adaab*, and the same zeal to enrich his sarod-baaj, Amjad strongly reminds us of his “abba.” Though still young in years, Amjad has already added to the rich traditions of his *gharana*.

When Amjad was born, Ustad Hafiz Ali was nearly 65, “old enough to be his grandfather.” But there seems to have been no problems of a generation gap between the ageing genius and his very young and brilliant son. Although the Ustad doted on his youngest son, he was a tough and unrelenting guru as far as the latter’s *taleem* and *riyaz* were concerned. The credit for moulding Amjad into the fine artist that he is today, goes entirely to the father’s strict and watchful training. Each fits well into the respective era into which he was born. The courtly age and atmosphere in which Hafiz Ali Khan lived and moved, had given a certain sophisticated and grave dignity to his public self. His courtly bearing and dignified behaviour were always marked by the courtesy and manners of a very

polished bygone generation. His *tehzeeb* was unfailing even on his death-bed. All these have left a lasting impression on Amjad.

Who can sum up the essential greatness of the Ustad better than this most well-known and popular torch-bearer of his family's musical traditions ?

Amjad Ali reminisced on the death anniversary of his late father : 'There was nothing small about my father. He was big physically and big of personality. He was great-hearted in his affections and in his generosity, and he was towering in his music. He was awesome in his moments of solemnity or wrath and yet on occasions, could be gentle and tender. At home with us all, he was a very simple man with simple pleasures and habits—almost childlike—I doubt if I will ever see the like of him again.'

This is the tribute of a son to his father, both great artistes—one bringing hope for the future, and the other bringing nostalgic memories of a glorious musical age of the past.

Chapter 20

Kesarbai Kerkar

Although the legendary Kesarbai died on 16th September 1977, she had, of her own choice, faded out of public memory long before the final curtain was rung down on her long life of 87 years. Being a very fastidious and highly sensitive artiste, she had voluntarily retired from the concert-stage the day she found her voice deteriorating due to old age. Consequently, when the grand old lady of Hindustani music died in 1977, there were only a few ripples of grief and a few tributes whereas in the case of other great contemporary musicians who died in the same decade, there was a flood of tributes and articles. Long ago, connoisseurs of music had placed her on a high pedestal, and there she stayed till the end, for, she had chosen to keep herself "contemptuously aloof from the rat-race." All her life she strove for perfection in her art, and such was her devotion to the musical traditions of her Gharana (the *Jaipur-Atrauli* or *Alladiya Khan* gharana) that she never cared to lower her lofty standards, not even to attract a large audience. Whereas the art of most of the great musicians of our times has been caught and preserved for us and for posterity through the highly-sophisticated L.P. Discs and tapes in AJR's priceless Archives, it looks as if Kesarbai was determined not to leave any trace of her grand music for posterity. Perhaps this apathy stemmed from her disillusionment at the deterioration in musical standards! She literally kept her brilliant musical flame hidden under a bushel so that for the majority of her contemporaries, Kesarbai's music remained a rare musical curio, accessible to a few lucky fans only. Few heard of her, and fewer still had the good fortune to hear her

grand music, her "rarely luminous and sonorous voice which could swoop down from a splendorous high *taar-saptak* to a deep resonant low *mandra-saptak* with incredibly uniform volume, and loud enough to be heard without a mike."

In the prime of her life, Kesarbai had moved the hearts of poets and prime ministers through her music. To the end, she treasured the deeply touching note that Poet Rabindranath Tagore had written in 1938 after hearing her music. Acclaiming her as the "Queen of Melody" (Surashree), the poet had written :—

"I consider myself fortunate in securing a chance for listening to Kesarbai's singing which is an artistic phenomenon of exquisite perfection... The magic of her voice with the mystery of its varied modulations has repeatedly proved its true significance not in any pedantic display of technical subtleties mechanically accurate, but in the revelation of the miracle of music only possible for a born genius".

Was it not a great pity that this divinely-gifted voice could not be heard actually by the majority of music-lovers scattered across the length and breadth of this vast sub-continent even though Kesarbai remained in excellent form for more than 20 years?

Out of the various *Gharanas* of Khayal-singing that are current today, one of the most difficult to appreciate and master perhaps is the Alladiya Khan *Gharana*. In Maharashtra, Alladiya Khan was called "Gaayan Maharshi" because more than 40 years of his life had been devoted to *tapasya* in the pursuit of this art, He jealously guarded his musical wealth, and apart from his brother Haidar Khan and sons Manji Khan and Bhurji Khan, very few outside his own family-circle succeeded in being accepted as his disciples. Only two "outsiders" measured up to Alladiya Khan's exacting standards. They were Kesarbai Kerkar and Moghubai Kurdikar.

The story of how Kesarbai steadfastly stuck to her training under her Ustad despite the many difficulties she encountered, and how unwaveringly she pursued the single aim of her life, is remarkable. A real sangeeta-bhakta acquires his or her art through total dedication and "penance" (*tapasya*). Kesarbai

devoted more than 20 years of the best part of her life to this *sadhana*, so that when she eventually emerged in public, the listeners were at once impressed by her remarkably trained voice, the polish and maturity of her performances, and her mastery over such a difficult style.

Born on July 10, 1890 in the small village of Keri (7 miles from Panaji) in Goa, Kesarbai's intense love for music was evident even as a child. The devotional music in the temples was what drew her to music. In her own words:— “In those days, the only centre of music was the temple. One heard only Kirtans, Bhajans, and other devotional songs. I used to listen to these carefully, and back home I would try to hum them just as today's boys and girls try to imitate film songs.”

Kesarbai's maternal uncle, a lover of classical music, encouraged the little girl by taking her to the nearby Mangesh temple. But the Pujaris there could teach her only Bhajans and Kirtans. At the age of 8 her real music lessons began under Ustad Abdul Karim Khan in Kolhapur, but these had to be discontinued when she had to return to Goa a year later. The next 19 years or so were a period of frustrations and disappointments, because bad luck seemed to pursue her in all her attempts to learn music. She had to go from place to place to learn music; but each time she started her lessons under a good and sincere guru, the latter would shortly be called away to a distant place by some rich patron.

In 1908, Kesarbai along with her mother and uncle, migrated to Bombay and for the next 6 years, she was able to take lessons from Barkatullah, a reputed Sitariya of the Mysore and Patna Darbars. For a year or so after discontinuing Barkatullah's lessons, Pandit Bhaskarbuwa Bhakle (a disciple of Nathan Khan and Ustad Alladiya Khan) trained her, but Pandit Bhakale had to shift to Poona. Pt. Ramkrishnan Buva Waze was her next guru. Thus continued her interrupted training under different gurus until a time came when Kesarbai got quite tired of it all and resolved that she would learn only from Ustad Alladiya Khan and from no one else. But the Ustad bluntly refused. After much persuasion, however, he reluctantly agreed to teach her, but not before he had laid down a number of “conditions” about the lessons. The determined

young pupil was not deterred by all these. In 1920, Kesarbai became Alladiya Khan's serious disciple after a real *Ganda-Bandh* ceremony in which she had to pay him "a neat lump-sum". As for the Ustad, once he accepted her as his *shagird*, and realised her sincerity of purpose and love for the art, he began to devote most of his time for her *taleem*. He would spend 9 to 10 hours each day teaching and guiding her during her *riyaz*. He was an extremely fastidious, thorough, and unsparing teacher, and his first concern was her voice-culture. He would make her repeat each note-combination (palta) hundreds of times until she became "note-perfect".

From 1920 to 1946, Kesarbai underwent all the arduous hours ("each day, more than 10 hours of *riyaz*") of practice and training imposed on her by her Ustad, and in the course of a decade or two, attained the musical status desired by him.

An important part of her training and one that gave her immense confidence and professional experience, was that Khan Sahib used to take Kesarbai everywhere and make her sing with him in all his concerts. The most memorable of these, according to her, was the Vikramaditya Conference in Bombay in January 1944 where she sang with her guru. The "gayan-maharshi" died in his nineties in 1946.

Kesarbai's solo-concert career began after her Ustad's death. Her fame spread far and wide, from Maharashtra to Delhi and Calcutta, and even to the South. Her very first recital that I heard was in a Madras Music Conference ; later on, I was lucky to hear her in many a Calcutta Music Conference. Some of the important requisites for good classical music are a steady, trained voice, purity of ragas, good *sahitya*, clear intonation, proportionate embellishments, and feeling in presentation. Kesarbai's chief asset was her firm, flexible, polished, well-trained voice. In a country where the supreme importance of voice-culture in music has not yet been fully realised, her voice stood out as an example of what voice-culture can be achieve ! From the lower octave (*mandra saptak*) to the higher (*Taar saptak*), her voice rang out in full-throated ease and uniform volume. The usual tendency among singers is to produce the higher notes in a squeaky falsetto voice. Kesarbai's style faithfully reflected all the special features of the Alladiya Khan

gharana such as rendering the Khayal mostly in the Vilambit and medium tempo, systematic elaboration of words woven into carefully worked-out note-combinations set in variegated rhythmic patterns, open-voice (*Akaar*) production, and a preference for unusual and difficult ragas and raga-combinations.

Although Kesarbai believed in laying equal emphasis on Bhava (mood) and Artha (meaning) of the song, the real charm of her music lay not in emotional expressiveness, but in the perfect precision of her *swaras*, *tal* and *bol* combinations. The systematic and well arranged *alaps*, *taans* and *bol-taans*, all ending accurately on the *mukhda* (the repetitive opening-line of the song) reveal years and years of hard practice. Kesarbai's carefully assembled clusters of note-combinations have been likened to "precious gems spread out against a velvety background". Her variegated, forceful *taans* have been compared to "jets of water from a fountain", and to "fireworks which shoot up high, and come down in a burst of colours". She used to take special delight in rendering rare raga-combinations like Basanti-Kedar, Sawani-Nat, Nat-Bilawal, Sawani-Kalyan etc. With rare ease, she rendered varieties of a Raga such as those of Malhar, Nat, Kanada and so on with all their hair-splitting differences. Perhaps it was to this all-round excellence that Pandit Buwa Waze referred when he compared her music to "a bouquet of fragrant flowers sprinkled with costly *itter* (scent)".

The style and standard that Kesarbai had mastered after long decades of "passionate pursuit of perfection" were admired by everyone and hard to equal. She refused to make any compromises with her music, and in the process, lost rapport with the contemporary world of music-lovers. She remained allergic to broadcasting and aloof from AIR, the only medium that can take the greatest music to the masses. Except for her rare *soirees* and concert-appearances in Bombay and Calcutta, there was no chance to hear her. Apart from the fact that Kesarbai preferred to maintain the exclusiveness of her music, it was a style that hardly allowed any concessions for mass-popularity. Therefore, she remained essentially a musicians' musician. Siddheswari Devi, Begum Akhtar, and M.S. Subbalakshmi have been among her ardent admirers.

Although she was one of the most rarely heard contemporary classical musicians, she was one of the most admired artistes and her name became almost legendary as one of the most dedicated sangeet-sadhaks of this century. Her music and her personality were alike dignified. It seems a great pity that posterity will have to judge this "musical aristocrat" merely on the basis of her few gramophone records, into the limited radius of which it is difficult to compress an elaborate style like hers. Throughout her career as a musician, Kesarbai maintained her dignity, prestige and high standards. As she said once :—"I have brought a certain amount of prestige and dignity to music as a career". Smt Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, once remarked about Kesarbai ; "Through the purity of her music and the dignity of her performance, she has moulded our standards of appreciation and has profoundly impressed other musicians." Many laurels and awards came her way. Tagore hailed her as "Surashri." She was the first woman to have received the Presidential Award in Hindustani Music (1953), and the first Rajya Gaayika of Maharashtra (1969), and finally she was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 1971. However, she rarely used these with her name. Her admirers in Bombay who were able to attend some of her exclusive soirees even in her old age, say that "there was no diminution in her august virtuosity, phenomenal breath-control and wide range of 3 octaves" all of which left her listeners breathless with wonder. The impact of her music continued to be intellectual and aesthetic at the same time. One wishes that at least Long-playing Commercial Discs would be soon made out of the rich treasures of her privately taped music.

As soon as Kesarbai began to feel that she could no longer give of her best in music, she sadly withdrew herself from the musical scene and became a recluse in her elegant home. In one of her last interviews when she had become an aged and ailing figure in her 82nd year, Kesarbai had told the interviewing music-critic : "I am ready for the final journey. But I have no regrets. I have the satisfaction of a good job well-done. For 70 years I have sung for the gods, and if, incidentally, I have also delighted the Indian people, I am doubly happy".

Chapter 21

Pandit Omkarnath Thakur

After listening to Pandit Omkarnath Thakur's music once, Mahatma Gandhi is said to have remarked : "Pandit Omkarnathji can achieve through a single song of his, what I cannot achieve through several speeches."

Such was the impact of Omkarnath Thakur's personality and his music on listeners. Besides being a successful musician, he was also endowed with an impressive personality who combined in himself many wonderful qualities of head and heart. The story of his early boyhood years is really a moving one, filled as it was, with struggles, privations, and poverty. But instead of being crushed under all this suffering, the boy's strong character, his inborn talents, and his fine qualities emerged with a rare brilliance out of the purifying fires of suffering. Omkarnathji's life-story proves how one who is destined to achieve greatness in life, will emerge triumphant, however adverse the circumstances might be. Such real-life stories strengthen one's belief in the Hindu theory of Samskara—the accumulated knowledge, goodness, culture etc. that one has earned through previous births.

Omkarnath was born on 24th June 1897 in village Jahaaj, in District Bhadaran (Cambay now). He was the fourth child of his parents. He had two brothers and one sister, named respectively Balakrishna (aged 12), Ravi Shankar (aged 4), and Parvati (aged 8).

His paternal grandfather Pandit Mahashankar Thakur, and father Pandit Gauri Shankar Thakur had been brave warriors

in the services of Nana Saheb Peshwa and Maharani Jammabai respectively. But, contact with a Yogi named "Alonibaba" changed the entire life and outlook of Pandit Gauri Shankar. He began to lose interest in all worldly affairs, and was initiated into *Pranav-Sadhana* or meditation of *Pranava* or "AUM" to which he began to devote more and more of his time. As his fourth child was born during this period of his life, he named the boy "Omkarnath".

Although Gauri Shankar led the life of a householder, his mind was pre-occupied most of the time with meditation on *Pranava*. Living in her husband's large joint-family, Omkarnath's mother Jhaverba had to put up with neglect, ill-treatment and harshness from her hard-hearted brother-in-law (Gauri Shankar's elder brother) who finally misappropriated all her clothes and ornaments, and turned out Jhaverba and her 4 small children from the house. But she was an amazing woman, full of an innate dignity, self-reliance, and endowed with immense reserves of physical and mental strength. Married to a recluse of a husband, and left with no other source of help, Jhaverba brought up her children independently by taking up domestic work in various houses. She never lost courage, nor sought help from anyone. The strong character, robust constitution, and innate sense of self-respect of his mother were to leave a lasting impression on the young Omkarnath's mind and character. Few musicians paid such meticulous attention to one's own health as he did. Apart from leading a thoroughly disciplined life, and always remaining very frugal in his eating habits, he devoted considerable time daily to physical exercises, "Surya-Namaskaaram", swimming, and even the exercises he had learnt from the famed wrestler Gaama ! Even in his late fifties, he is said to have continued most of these exercises. From his father, Omkarnath inherited great courage and a religious bent of mind, an urge for *Pranav-Saadhana* which, in his case, went a step further, into *Naad-Upaasana*, or worship of the Infinite through Music. When his father took to "Sanyas" and went to live alone in a little hut on the banks of the River Narbada, young Omkarnath was torn between his love and concern for his poor, over-worked mother, and his adoration for his reli-

gious-minded father. The boy learnt cooking and began to work as a cook in a lawyer's house in order to supplement his mother's meagre earnings as a domestic servant. In between, he would run many miles so that he could reach his father's hut, clean, sweep and cook for him and fill pitchers of water for his use ! He imbibed the courage and dignity of his mother, and the scholarly austere nature of his father. For some time, he worked as a mill-hand. The owner of the mill was so captivated by the curly-haired, good-looking, intelligent and hard-working boy that he wished to adopt him ! But Omkarnath's father adamantly refused:—" My boy will not become the adopted son of some rich man. But he is going to win rich laurels and fame with the blessings of Goddess Saraswati".

Omkarnath used to say that his father was gifted with many miraculous Yogic powers. He had foretold the exact day and hour of his death (in 1910) : Prior to shaking off his mortal coils, Pandit Gauri Shankar called his favourite son Omkarnath to his side, blessed him with a betel-roll with which he wrote a precious "mantra" on the boy's tongue !

Before long, Omkarnath's deep love and yearning for music and his rare musical talents became obvious. His saviour came in the form of *Seth Shahpur-ji Mancherji Dungaji*, a very generous philanthropist from Bhadoch. The kind Sethji got Omkarnath admitted into Pandit Vishnu Digambar's Music School in Bombay. Under Pandit Digambar's loving guidance and training, Omkarnath was groomed into an excellent musician. During those rewarding 6 years or so in the ennobling presence of his guru in the latter's *gurukula*, Omkarnath served his teacher like a devoted son, and imbibed all the music that he had longed to learn. The guru was so pleased with his progress that in 1916 when the former started his famous Gandharva Maha-Vidyalaya in Lahore, he appointed the 20 years-old Omkarnath as the principal ! While serving the school in this capacity, young Omkarnath led a very disciplined and pure life, setting aside only 6 hours for sleep, and devoting the remaining 18 hours for his own *riyaz* and for teaching his students. In 1918 he was sent to Baroda as an Examiner where he left a deep impression on Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad and on the Diwan Sri Monubhai.

In the same year, he was invited to sing in the famous Harvallabh-mela of Jullunder on the same day as Pandit Bhaskarbuwa Bakkle. It is said that both of them—the young and handsome Omkarnath, and the ageing veteran Bhaskarbuwa Bakkle gave such fine recitals that the audiences showered coins and ornaments on the stage as a mark of appreciation ! That was the beginning of his spectacularly successful and long career as a performing musician, a career which was to last until his last fatal illness several decades later. Even after he reached the peak of his career, he never relaxed in his Naadopaasana. Along with this, he carried on his Yoga-Saadhana, physical exercises, and worship of his favourite deity, Sri Rama. For 25 continuous years (1926 to 1951), he kept up his daily recital of Cantos from the Ramcharitamaanas, of which he had made a deep study. Like his Guru Pandit Vishnu Digambar, Omkarnath also specially enjoyed the Ramdhun and Ram-nam-Keertan.

In 1922, Omkarnathji married Indira Devi the noble daughter of a rich Seth, Prahladji Dalsukhram Bhatt of Surat. In 1924 he got his first chance to go to Nepal on a royal invitation. In spite of the hardships of the journey to Nepal in those days, it turned out to be a worthwhile trip because Omkarnath won the unstinted admiration of H. H. Maharaja Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur who rewarded him with Rs 5000 in cash and offered him the post of a court musician on a monthly salary of Rs 3000. But Omkarnath refused this tempting offer because he was longing to get back to his mother at whose feet he, on his return, placed all the money and costly presents that he had received as rewards. This was something he had always longed to do. Practice of music and study of ancient Shastras became his obsessions. He was also a great patriot, and was elected as President of the Bhadoch Congress Committee, and as a member of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee.

In 1930 Omkarnathji was again invited to visit Nepal and was showered with more honours and rewards. This time he placed everything at the feet of his revered Guru Pandit Vishnu Digambar who embraced his worthy pupil with great love and

pride. From then onwards, his fame spread far and wide, and he was invited to sing in Music Conferences in Mysore, Hyderabad, Bengal etc. In Hyderabad he gave such an inspired rendering of raga Malkauns that Pandit Digambar hugged and blessed him with tears of pride and joy in his eyes.

Earlier in his life, while working as an employee in a Jain establishment, Omkarnath had learnt to read and write from the Jain monks. Later on, by his own efforts he had mastered several languages like Hindi, Marathi, English, Sanskrit, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu and Nepali. Really, his thirst for knowledge was unquenchable.

After the death of his beloved Guru Pt. Vishnu Digambar in 1931, Omkarnath went to Italy on an invitation to participate in the International Music Conference in Florence (1933). The story of how "he sang before Mussolini and cured him of his insomnia" was soon on everybody's lips. Thereafter, he travelled widely, giving music recitals, lecture demonstrations in Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, London, Wales, Switzerland etc. He sang before King Amanullah of Afghanistan. In London, some friends advised him to beg for an opportunity to sing before King George V, so that he could obtain the title of "Rai Bahadur". But Omkarnath was too self-respecting to stoop to such means for obtaining free titles. He was proceeding to Russia when he suddenly received the shocking news of the sudden death (in childbirth) of his gentle, devoted wife, Indira Devi. He rushed back home and was so stunned by the loss that he had a breakdown and a temporary loss of memory. Omkarnath always spoke tenderly of his loving life-partner but for whose selfless devotion and co-operation, he could never have attained the status he did in music. I still remember how at a huge music conference in Calcutta many years ago, the audience requested him to sing Neelambari. But he begged to be excused as Neelambari had been a favourite of his late wife and he felt he would have a breakdown if he tried to render it that evening! He always cherished memories of her devotion gratefully. After her death, his relatives, friends, and even his loving mother tried hard to persuade him to remarry, but Omkarnath stuck to his *Eka-Patni vrata* saying:—

"My favourite deity is Lord Rama. Like Him, I believe that each man should marry only once in his life-time, and cherish her throughout life."

Artistes are generally associated with moral laxities and even vices. In such a world, Pandit Omkarnath's life stands out as a rare example of lofty morality, self-discipline and austere living.

After Pandit Omkarnath recovered from the shock of his wife's tragic death and resumed his singing career, his music was tinged with a touch of pathos. He left Bhadoch with its painful memories, and migrated to Bombay where he started his "Sangeet Niketan". Meanwhile, he travelled all over the country giving recitals, and won wide popularity. Mahaamand Madan Mohan Malaviya was very keen to start the Faculty of Music in the Benares Hindu University under Panditji's guidance, but Malaviyaji died before this was finalised. However, Pandit Govind Malaviya fulfilled his father's dream in August 1950 when the Music Faculty was inaugurated in B.H.U. and Pandit Omkarnath was appointed its first Dean. He occupied the Chair with great dignity, worked with a missionary's zeal, and nursed the infant Faculty into blooming youth. Not only did he possess a magnetic personality, high musical calibre both as a singer and as a musicologist, but also he had the compassion of an artiste, administrative acumen and gifts of oratory, infinite patience as a teacher, and deep love for his disciples. Cut off from his kith and kin, he began to look upon his *shishyas* as his true sons and daughters. He has left a large legacy of good disciples, many of them being practical musicians, while some others became well-known musicologists. Among them, a few names are:—Dr. Premlata Sharma, Yashwant Rai Purohit, Balwant Rai Bhatt, Kanakrai Trivedi, Shiv Kumar Shukla, Phiroj K. Dastur, Bijonbala Ghosh Dastidar, Dr. N. Rajam, Rajbhau Sontakke, Smt. Subhadra Kulshreshta, Atul Desai, P.N Barwe, Km. Nalini Gajendragadkar, and so on. Few maestros have groomed such a large number of Shishyas in recent times. Dr. N. Rajam, a favourite disciple of his used to be his violin-accompanist in nearly all his concerts during the last years of his life. Her style is full of nostalgic touches from her guru's music; often

when she tries to recapture the guru's typical touches, Kaakuprayog etc. tears flow from her eyes. That he could inspire so much guru-bhakti in his pupils, proves his goodness as a teacher.

Pandit Omkarnath was a friend and *guru-bandhu* of the famous violin-virtuoso (late) Parur Sundaram whose son M.S. Gopalakrishnan is one of the most outstanding violin artistes of today both in Karnatic and Hindustani music. M.S.G's style has been considerably influenced by Pandit Omkarnath's vocal style. Towards his "large family of pupils", Panditji's attitude was that of a strict but loving father. A fluent speaker, an impressive singer, and a bit of a dramatist, he could easily win over his audiences. A firm believer in the prime importance of a clean and healthy physique in order to keep up the exacting art of music, he not only continued his swimming, wrestling, and *praanaayaam*, but also tried to impress on his students the importance of these through his own example. A moderate eater, a strict vegetarian, fastidious in the matter of cleanliness, absolutely free from vices of any kind, and a stickler to punctuality, he really set a good example among musicians and teachers. The impact of Pandit Omkarnath's music and personality has been well described by a music critic (Gurudev Sharan) in the following words:

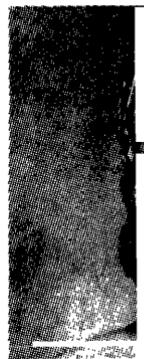
"One was struck as much by the leonine grandeur of his personality as by his stentorian voice-- Dressed in a flowing white silk robe, he made a great impression on the audiences by his very presence. His compelling resilient voice with an amazingly wide tonal range, seemed to blend perfectly with the dignity of his bearing".

One fact that gave Omkarnathji immense satisfaction and joy was that he realized his long cherished dream of making his beloved mother's last years most comfortable and relaxed. She lived up to the ripe old age of 97 enjoying good health and sharing her devoted son's days of glory, fame, and prosperity.

With his beautifully cultivated and powerful voice, his emotional (and dramatic) singing and fluent lecture-demonstrations, he contributed a great deal to the realization of his Guru's ambition of popularising traditional music. About him, Dr. Rajam writes : "The most striking feature of my



USTAD ABDUL KARIM KHAN
(1872-1937)



USTAD MUSHTAQ HUSSAIN KHAN
(1872-1962)

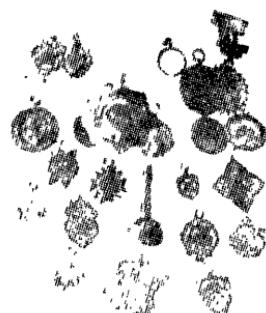




USTAD AHMAD JAN THIRAKWA
(1878-1976)



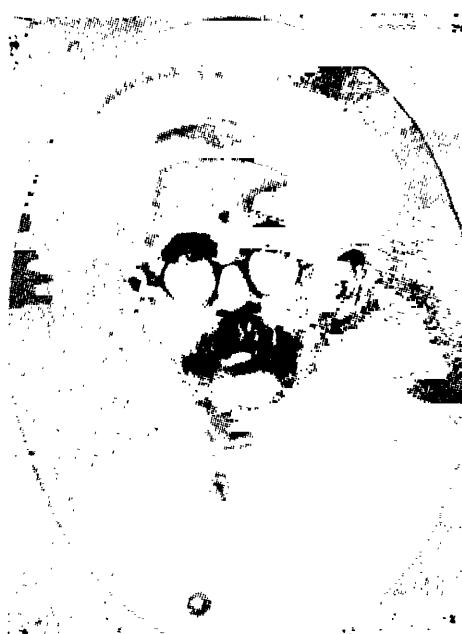
AFTAB-E-MOUSQUI
USTAD FAIYAZ KHAN
(1880-1950)





PIR-O-MURSHID
PROF. SUFI INAYAT KHAN
(1882-1927)

RAJA BHAIYA POOCHWALE
(1882-1956)





USTAD YUSUF ALI KHAN
(1887-1962)



USTAD HAFIZ ALI KHAN
(1888-1972)



SUSHEELA MISRA TALKING TO USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN SON OF
USTAD HAFIZ ALI KHAN ABOUT THE LIFE OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS FATHER

KESARBAI KERKAR
(1890-1977)





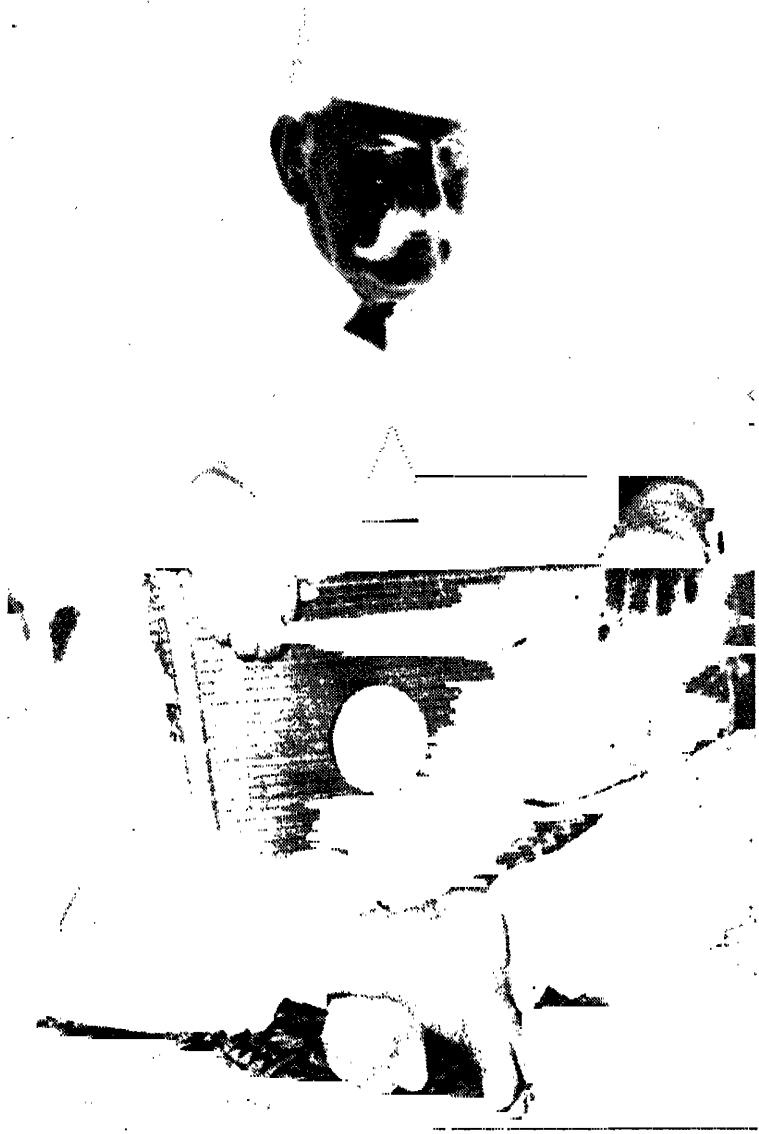
PDT OMKARNATH THAKUR ACCOMPANIED BY PARUR SUNDARAM AND HIS SON M.S. GOPALAKRISHNAN,
OUTSTANDING VIOLINISTS OF OUR TIMES; ON THE VIOLIN AND CHATURLAI ON THE TABLA.



DR. S.N. RATANJANKAR
(1900-1974)



DR. S.N. RATANJANKAR WITH SOME OF HIS GREAT CONTEMPORARIES
L TO R USTAD ALAUDDIN KHAN, RAJA BHAIYA POOCHWALA AND
WADILAL SHIVRAM, MUSICOLOGIST



USTAD BADE GHULAM ALI KHAN (1901-1968)

guru's music was the evoking of emotions in the minds of listeners through the media of *swara*, *sahitya*, appropriate facial expressions, *Kaakus* (voice modulations) etc. His tender and deep emotion found an ideal vehicle in his soft and sonorous voice. The pains and privations that he suffered in life resulted in a unique emotion-packed music. In fact, his tremendous success with listeners lay in his deep understanding of the basic emotions and the clear conception of the *swaras*, the exact tonal shade and the modulations required to translate them into the language of music---Music to him was worship. His approach to Naadopasana was that of a devotee towards religious rituals".

In an article entitled "Abhinaya Aur Sangeet", Dr. Premlata Sharma (a favourite disciple of his) points out how a bit of histrionics is essential to make one's music effective. Most musicians do not pay adequate attention to this, and consequently, fail to create any impression on listeners. Pdt Omkarnath made conscious and full use of "Abhinaya" in all its aspects, through dramatic voice-modulations (*Kaaku prayog*), *angaraga* (tasteful elegant clothes), *mukhamudras* (facial expressions) and *hastachalan* (hand gestures). It was the deliberate use of all these aspects of Abhinaya that helped him to create such a strong audio-visual impact on his audiences. Those of us who have watched and heard him singing some of his special songs like "*Jogi Mat Ja Mat Ja*", "*Mai nahi makhan khaayo*", "*Ek baar Jogi*", "*Vandemataram*", etc, can always recall and visualize his facial expressions, hand-gestures, and voice modulations for emotional expression. This was how he used to bring out the joys of Bahar, the resigned sadness of Nilambari, the plaintive appeal of "Jogi mat ja" in Bhairavi, or the patriotic fervour of "Vande Mataram"! Prithviraj Kapoor, the famed Thespian, a great admirer of Omkarnath's music, used to say: "Omkarnath Thakur's dramatic presentation of songs should not only be heard, but seen too!".

On his Alapchari was the deep influence of the style of Auliya Rahmat Khan (son of Hassu Khan). He had fully imbibed the musical style of his guru Pt. Vishnu Digamber. Although the guru never encouraged Thumri singing, Omkarnath could render Thumris also very effectively.

A great scholar in music, Omkarnath has left behind for posterity many valuable treatises on music such as the “*Sangeetanjali*” series, the “*Pranav Bharati*” which covers 3 aspects of music (Swara, Raga, and Rasa). He was also a composer of merit, a *vagyeyakar* who had good mastery over Sahitya and Sangeet alike. The definition of a *vagyeyakar* says: “*Vaacham geyam cha kurute, sa Vagyeyakara*”. Into his compositions he usually wove in at the end his pen-name “*Pranav*” or “*Pranav Rang*”. He always planned his concert details with a careful eye on audience-reactions. His “*Sangeetanjali*” deals with the practical aspects of music (6 parts), and “*Pranav Bharati*” with the theoretical aspects.

Among the several awards and titles conferred on him were the “*Padma Sri*” in 1955, *Sangeet Prabhakar* by Pdt Madan Mohan Malaviya, “*Sangeet Martand*” from Calcutta Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya in 1940, and “*Sangeet Mahamahodaya*” from the ruler of Nepal in 1930.

Omkarnathji devoted himself heart and soul in building up the Sri Kala Sangeet Bharati in B.H.U. from the year of its inception in 1950 until his retirement in 1957. In 1954 he had a heart attack from which he recovered well enough to resume his concert programmes. The last time I heard him was in our Lucknow Radio Concert on 10th March 1965 (accompanied on the violin by Rajam). In July 1965 he had a serious paralytic stroke in Bombay; when he recovered from this to some extent, he went to his native Broach where he had purchased a house of his liking, but he was not destined to live a relaxed life in that home. For, the severe stroke that he had in June 1966 affected his whole body, and even his memory. The last years of his life were very pathetic and lonely as his mother, brothers, sister, wife, had all predeceased him. Dr. Rajam wrote: “It was a pity that he had to lead a lonely life all through. He had neither a house of his own, nor a relative to fall back upon in his old age, nor even a reliable servant to look after him. It was a pathetic sight to see him at the ripe age of 65 sweep the floors and cook his food all by himself. He used to remark that it was not in his luck to have a settled home.....At the fag end of his career, when

he did buy a house at Broach, the cruel hand of Fate prevented him from settling down there."

The last stroke of paralysis kept him in painful obscurity for three long years until death, the Healer, came to his rescue. Since he had left Kashi and spent his last bed-ridden years in Broach, very few of his loved disciples could serve or nurse him. Balvantrai Bhatt was one of the few disciples who accompanied him in his funeral procession.

Pt. Omkarnath Thakur lived a clean, purposeful and fruitful life and greatly enriched Hindustani music. Large numbers of his shishyas continue his musical traditions and nurse nostalgic memories of their great Guru who left this world on 29th December 1967. Besides his gramophone records, the Archives of AIR have preserved many recordings of Pdt Omkarnath Thakur.

Dr. Srikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar

Never before has the world of Hindustani classical music received such a double—blow as on February 14, 1974, when it lost two stalwarts on the same day. In the death of Padma Bhushan Srikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar, we lost a most dedicated musician and erudite musicologist, and a few hours later, the grand voice of Padma Bhushan Amir Khan was stilled for ever in a tragic car accident. Both have bequeathed precious musical legacies for posterity, each in his own way.

Pandit Ratanjankar with his life of almost ascetic simplicity, his dedication to and personal sacrifice for the propagation of classical music, and indifference to publicity and money, was quite an extraordinary personality in this era when the majority of professionals hanker after fame, wealth, and a following. The mantle of the great Chaturpandit Bhatkhande could not have fallen on worthier shoulders. Like his guru, Ratanjankar was “a dedicated soul wedded to music.” While tragedy after tragedy struck his personal life, Pt. Ratanjankar sought solace for his soul by plunging deeper and deeper into the art which alone gave him a purpose in life and courage to pursue the ideals set before him by his revered guru.

Decades ago, when Pt. Ratanjankar was known with affection and respect as “Anna Saheb” among his colleagues, friends and followers, and his voice was in excellent form, he could have chosen the more paying and exciting life of a practical musician. But, such was his reverence and loyalty to the memory of his Guru, that he chose to follow the latter’s footsteps, to continue the work of training generations of musicians

and music teachers, and to work in every possible way for the propagation of classical music. So dedicated was he to his ideals, that he stuck on steadfastly to the Principalship of the Bhatkhande Music College, Lucknow, through three long decades when emoluments were meagre, and sometimes, not forthcoming at all! Leaving his family in Bombay, Srikrishna Ratanjankar spent the best years of his life cooped up in a small room next to his equally small office-cum-class room in the college. It would not be an exaggeration to say that but for the enormous personal sacrifices that he made, this music college would not have survived the years of poverty and emerged as such a reputed institution to-day. While personal tragedies assailed his life repeatedly, this small, frail, man continued to live like a true Karma Yogi, imparting music to students and scholars who flocked to him from all parts of India, and Ceylon, writing scholarly articles on music for various journals, seminars and radio-talks, and enriching our music with a prolific number of masterly compositions such as *Khayals*, *Lakshana-gcets*, *Taranas* and *Bhajans* (in Hindi and Sanskrit). An erudite scholar in music, he remained an eager student and research-scholar till the end.

Born on the first dawn of this century in a middle-class Maharashtrian family of Bombay, Srikrishna's father (an officer in the C.I.D.) had a deep and discriminating interest in music. Therefore, he was able to have the good fortune of receiving excellent training in the art under the most efficient masters available. At the age of 7, young Srikrishna was put under the training of Pt. Krishnam Bhat of Karwar (a pupil of Kale Khan of Patiala Gharana) whose method of teaching was so thorough that in 2 years of (nothing but) scale-exercises, the boy's "swar-jnan" was perfected. His next teacher was Pt. Anant Manohar Joshi (a pupil of Balakrishna-Buwa). It was about this time that Srikrishna's family came into contact with Pt. Bhatkhande Ji. The latter was so deeply impressed by the boy's talent and zeal, that the Chatur-pandit predicted that with proper training, he would not only become a great musician, but also a pioneer in the rejuvenation and popularization of Hindustani classical music.

From 1912, Ratanjankar's family had to endure many misfortunes. Young Srikrishna lost his mother, and his father had to retire from service on a premature pension owing to recurring heart-attacks. Unable to live in a costly place like Bombay, the family shifted to Ahmadnagar where Srikrishna, though only 13, began to give "mehfils" (music sittings) and became very popular.

In 1916 Srikrishna took part in the first All India Music conference in Baroda. In 1917, he was given a scholarship by Baroda State for studying music. The family moved to Baroda where the teen-aged musician taught the Maharani for some time. With Pandit Bhatkhandes approval he became a disciple of *Aftab-e-Mousiqui* Ustad Faiyaz Khan and remained with him for five years. The mutual affection and respect between these two was great, and the Ustad always mentioned Srikrishna's name as one of the most eminent of his "musical heirs".

In 1923 Ratanjankar's family went back to Bombay. In spite of the vicissitudes of the family, and his all-engrossing musical training, he found time to pursue his academic studies as well, and in the year 1925, Ratanjankar graduated from the Wilson College. The contact with Pandit Bhatkahandeji was always maintained, and then Ratanjankar began to take classes and give performances in the Sharada Sangeet Mandal sponsored by Bhatkhande. Later on, when Pt. Bhatkhande started the Music College in Lucknow, Ratanjankar was brought here, first as professor, and soon after, became Principal. The latter used to accompany the "Chaturpandit during his visits to the various eminent musicians of the day to collect ancient compositions from various *Gharanas*. Thus he was able to learn an enormous number of old and traditional compositions (*Dhrupads*, *Dhamar*, *Khayals*, *Lakashanageet* and *Thumri*). Like Bhatkhandeji, his disciple also strove in various ways through lectures, classes, demonstrations, writings etc., to revive interest in classical music among the public.

A senior music teacher of today recalls the first time he met and heard Sri Ratanjankar. It was in the All India Music Conference organised in Lucknow in 1924. In that conference where music maestros from all important centres like Rampur

Jaipur, Gwalior, Alwar, Dholpur, Indore, Baroda and Maihar had assembled, Shrikrishna somehow stood out like a young Abhimanyu among the revered Dronas, Bhishmas, etc. Besides being a graduate and a polished musician, he was already a profound scholar in music. His voice was in excellent form, and his erudition in "Sangeet Shastra" was astounding. He could render rare and difficult ragas like *Deepaks*, *Patmanjari*, *Natnarayan*, *Bhankar*, etc., with as much ease as the *Prachalit* (current and popular) ones like *Yaman*, *Bilawal*, *Todi*, *Bhairavi* etc.

He knew by heart even the rare compositions published in the fifth and sixth parts of Bhatkhande's *Kramik Series*. We could not help wondering how and when he had managed to learn such a large number of ragas and compositions, to take his B. A. Degree, and to make such a deep study of classics like *Sangeeta-Ratnakar*, *Natya - Shashtra*, *Lakshya-Sangeet*, *Raga Tala vibodh* and so on!

Those who have had the good fortune to listen to "Anna Saheb's" (Ratanjankar's) music when he was in his best form can never forget the vastness of his *raga* - and - *songs* - repertoire, the richness of his creative imagination, the purity and precision of his note-combinations, and the overall beauty of his well-integrated, systematic style. Being of a shy and quiet temperament, and a genuine votary of music, Annasaheb never made any concessions to placate plebian tastes. He retired into his own quiet shell, and loosened the springs of his great and unspoilt art, only in front of the knowing and discerning few. His style, though basically of the Jaipur Gharana, bore the unmistakable impression of Ustad Faiyaz Khan's *Agra* or *Rangeela* style, while delightfully combining some of the best characteristics of the *Gwalior-gharana*. The resulting synthesis was a remarkable individual style of his own. It was a rare combination of sweetness and dignity, aesthetic purity and creativeness and of *swara suddhi* with *Uchchaar suddhi* (purity of notes and intonation). I have had the good fortune to listen to innumerable *soirees* of Annasaheb when his music was at the peak of its glory. Some of his memorable performances were at the various festival functions organised in the college such as *Basant*, *Hori*, *Janmashtami* and so on. But it was at the annual *Sangeet Dhara* programmes, dedicated to Pt. Bhatkhande's

memory, that he really sang like one inspired, and poured out his soul in song, in honour of his gurus “*Punya tithi*.” Past and present students, musicians from far and near, used to flock to participate in this unbroken-musical stream which commenced at dawn on 19th of September each year, and lasted for 72 hours. The ragas *Paraj*, *Bhairavi*, *Lalit Poncham*, *Desh*, *Darbari*, *Sohini*, and *Malhar* that I heard him sing in the Nineteen-forties still echo in my ears.

Throughout the day and late into the night, Annasaheb lived in a musical world of his own, engrossed in ancient music classics, and composing new rare-combinations like *Marga-Bihag*, *Kedar Bahar*, *Sawani Kedara*, *Rajani Kalyan*, *Salag Varali*, *Sankara Karan* etc. He also experimented on new types of compositions like *Varnams* from Carnatic music with Hindi Sahitya and *Taranas* with Sanskrit verses instead of Persian ones. Well versed in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Marathi, all this came to him with ease. It was a joke (though a fact) among his students, that his “companions” during railway-journeys were never light magazines or novels, but heavy classics like the *Samaveda*, *Bharata Natya Sastra*, and *Sangeeta Ratnakara*.

With the passing of years, the strenuous years of music-teaching, the impact of tragic personal losses, and deteriorating health—all these factors ruined his voice. Ratanjankar performed less and less frequently. He concentrated on other aspects of music-creativity. As an examiner in various universities, and as a member of the Syllabus-Committee, he wrote and published his *Sangeet Shiksha* in 3 parts the *Abhinava Sangeet Shiksha*, *The Tana Samgraha*, etc. His *Abhinava - Rag Manjari* alone contains nearly 200 of his original and beautiful compositions. He never tried to publicise the fact that his compositions are being broadcast from the various stations of All India Radio almost every day. Generations of musicians will revere his memory as one of the most eminent and prolific *Vagyeyakars* of modern times. Only a musician-cum-scholar could create such beautiful classical songs in which *Swaras* and *Sahitya*, blend so harmoniously. Annasaheb’s musical credo was that the effect of music ought to be, and is “pure aesthetic joy” and that the musician should be able to

"draw out from every raga whatever rasa or emotion he wishes to". Perhaps it was to illustrate this point that he wrote his successful musical operas-*Gorardhanodhar*, *Jhansi Ki Rani* and *Shivamangalam*. The first of these was put out as a national programme from all stations of AIR. In all of them, he made use of a plethora of ragas to produce various *rasas*.

When the Indira Kala Sangeet University was inaugurated in Khairagarh (Madhya Pradesh), Principal Ratanjankar was persuaded to accept the Vice-Chancellorship. Leaving his humble college in Lucknow was a most painful wrench for him. Again, like a true *karma-yogi*, he felt it was his duty to take up this new challenging job, see this infant University through its birth-pangs, and put it on firm foundations. In fact, a less dedicated person could not have borne this heavy responsibility. Night and day, he strove selflessly for the University. Only his closest-associates know how he secretly used to donate a large slice of his own salary back to the University whenever funds became inadequate. He did not lay down the heavy reins of this office until he had steered this institution out of troubled waters and set it sailing along calm seas.

At a time when the majority of north Indian musicians looked askance at Karnatak music, Shri Ratanjankar was one of the very few who studied deeply the theory and ragas of the Karnatak system, appreciated its great traditions, and adapted much from it to enrich the Hindustani system. Averse to party politics, and narrow provincialism, he remained dignified and above petty jealousies. Sangeet Kalanidhi Justice Venkatrama Iyer described Ratanjankar as "*the symbol of the unity of Indian music*". As a member of the expert committee of the Music Akademy, Madras, he contributed richly to "promote close mutual understanding between the two systems".

As chairman of the Music Auditions Board, Pt. Ratanjankar was closely associated with AIR for a number of years. He participated in many music seminars with his scholarly papers. Among his more well-known disciples may be mentioned the late Chandrasekhar Pant, the late Chidanand Nagarkar, Chinmoy Lahiri, Dinkar Kaikini, P.N. Chinchoro,

Dr. Sumati Mutatkar, S.C.R., Bhat, K.G. Ginde and others. While all of them have been regular broadcasters, two of them served on the staff of the AIR for many years. But now most of them are teaching music.

Shri Ratanjankar adorned many positions of honour in the world of music and was honoured with the title of "*Padma Bhushan*" by President Rajendra Prasad in recognition of his outstanding services to music.

Musicians and musicologists from all over the country pay their homage to the memory of this rare "missionary" in music who lived a life of utter simplicity and dedication, and who enriched Hindustani music in many ways. In one of his many lovely Bhajans he used to sing: "It is a precious gift to be born as a human being on this earth. Do some good work while you are here. Keep your mind and body and your entire life pure and clean. Help those in need. Make your life useful and purposeful". In fact, this describes Pt. Ratanjankar's own approach to life.

Chapter 23

Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan

The death of no other classical musician in recent times has had such a stunning effect as the passing away of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan had in April 1968 on the world of Indian music. AIR was flooded with poignant tributes and homages from great musicians, musicologists and music-lovers from all over the country.

The great maestro used to say: "Music is to me more than my food. It is my only life and I cannot live without it. I would rather die with a song on my lips than live without music." Years ago, he had to undergo a serious goitre operation after which he was advised complete vocal and physical rest by his surgeon-friend. Hardly 24 hours had elapsed when he burst into a *taan* covering 3 octaves! When his surgeon affectionately admonished him for it, his childlike reply was: "I had to see if my voice has been affected. Without it, what use is my life to me?"

When Bade Ghulam Ali was stricken with paralysis in 1961 his admirers all over the country felt deeply grieved not only for themselves, but even more for the great Ustad for whom life without music would be nothing better than the silence of the tomb. Those who had seen his utter helplessness after the stroke, had no hope of hearing his wonderful singing-voice again. But after some time, excited rumours spread that he was going to stage a come-back, rumours that seemed too good to be true. But he proved how mind can triumph over the body. There he was on the stage—"frail in body,

but exuberent in spirit, looking like a disabled lion—still majestic in his deportment, a twinkle in his eyes, and that impish smile on his lips". Music circles took the lead in restoring his self-confidence. In his programme (relayed by AIR) after receiving the Presidential Award, he seemed to have set a challenge for himself by singing Khayals and Tarana (in Yaman)—just to reassure himself that his *taans* had at least not been "crippled" by the stroke.

Another of his "come-back" appearances was in the Fourth Music and Dance Festival (1967) sponsored by the Government of Maharashtra. He had to be brought on a chair and seated on the stage before the curtain went up. He was surrounded by his various accompanists and admirers on the stage; but he refused to start singing. Reason:—"You have switched off all the audience lights and I can see no one in the dark. How can I feel like singing unless I have a *darshan* of my dear listeners who have come from far and near in their affection for me?" A glimpse of the adoring crowds, and he broke into his inimitable *Khayal* in Rag *Chchaya* (*Jo kare Ram Kripa*) full of devotional fervour. For the true musician, there is only one God—by whichever name you address Him. The great artist that he was, Ghulam Ali was not interested in political and religious differences. He knew of only two categories of humanity—music-lovers and the uninterested ones. "I know only one thing-Music ! I am little interested in other things. I am just a humble devotee of God and Music."

Ghulam Ali not only believed in the divine origin of music but also in the story that music came into his family when one of his Pathan ancestors (Fazl Peerdad Khan) migrated to Hindustan from Ghazni, became a Fakir, and worshipped the Goddess of music for years among the lonely mountain-tops of the north until one day she appeared before the music-mad devotee and blest him. "Music will run in your family from generation to generation". Peerdada handed over his *ilm* to Miyan Irshad Ali Khan (great-grandfather of Ghulam Ali) from whom it came to Id Mohammad Khan (Ghulam Ali's grandfather), to father Ali Buksh, uncle Kale Khan, and on to Bade Ghulam Ali. Their *Gharana* was known as the *Kasur Gharana*.

Born in Lahore in 1901, Ghulam Ali's musical gifts were evident at an incredibly early age. As an infant he once wailed in the same pitch in which his father and his famous uncle Kale Khan were singing! Reminiscing over his childhood, the Ustad once said: "I do not know at what age I began to master the 12 notes. This much I can say. At the age of 3 or 4 when I started talking, I had some idea of the 12 notes. I learnt sargam as a child learns his mother-tongue."

Recognising the musical potentialities of the child, Ali Bux put him, at the age of seven, under the tutelage of Khan Sahib Kale Khan of Patiala for the next ten years. After the Khan Sahib's death, Ghulam Ali continued his training under his own father. Both his uncle and father had received good training from Khan Sahib Fateh Ali Khan, the court musician of Patiala.

What fired him with a feeling of challenge was a small incident. When Kale Khan died, a certain musician made a caustic remark that "music was dead with Kale Khan." This put young Ghulam Ali on his mettle. In his own words: "For the next five years, music became my sole passion. I practised hard day and night, even at the cost of sleep. All my joys and sorrows were centred on music."

Ghulam Ali was gifted with all the attributes of a great musician: musical lineage, sound training, and high artistic sensibility. "To me the purity of the note is the supreme thing", he used to say. Ghulam Ali also had the privilege of receiving *talim* from Ashiq Ali (who belonged to the Gharana of Tanras Khan), and from the late Baba Sindhi Khan. Some people detected shades of Ustad Wahid Khan's charming style in his Khayal alap.

Whether it was a Khayal with a courtly theme, a Thumri with wistfully romantic word-content, a playful Dadra or a soulful Bhajan, Ghulam Ali Khan could always put his heart and soul into the song. We have no dearth of great traditionalists and purists who can impress the intellect by their technical mastery. But what is music without a soul! Ghulam Ali's music was "the best imaginable blend of appeal and technique." Few could touch the listeners' hearts as he could. No wonder, that no other classical vocalist earned such country-wide

adulation as he did. Among his many contributions to Hindustani music, the outstanding one is that he opened the eyes and ears of contemporary musicians and music-lovers to the prime importance of voice culture and voice-modulation and the supreme value of emotion in music. "A voice is not just a ready-made gift from the gods. One has to earn it, polish it, and gain absolute command over it by Sangeet Sadhana"—he used to say.

A remarkable fact in Bade Ghulam Ali's life was his transformation, in the early part of his life, from the role of a Sarangi player to that of a vocalist. This experience really enriched his *taans* and we admire him all the more for it, but somehow Ghulam Ali never liked to be reminded about that early phase of his life!

The amazing pliability of his voice, his unpredictable swara-combinations, the incredible speed of his tans, and the ease with which he could sway his audiences by his emotional renderings—these were some of the qualities which became the envy and despair of many a rival.

As I sit and recall the numerous concerts of Bade Ghulam Ali that I had the good fortune to attend, I find that there was not a single *rasha* that he could not bring to life through his music. Such was the power of his music that be it summer or winter, if he chose to sing Basant and (or), Bahar, he could conjure up before the audience, the entire beauty, youthful exuberance, bursting buds, and blossoms, the poignancy of separation and the entire atmosphere of Spring. Suddenly he would wave the magic wand of his music, and when he started that peerless Desh of his—"Kali Ghata ghir aye Sajani", the audience could almost hear the rumbling of thunder (in the deep, growling *mandra* notes) see the flashes of lightning (in his sweeping *taan*), and share the beloved's agony of separation (through the exquisite *meends*) and so on. In his Thumri "Naina more taras rahe" (in *Jangla Bhairavi*), he could bring out the entire longing of the eyes to behold the "*Pardesi balam*." What passion cannot music raise and quell! He sang strictly within the traditional framework, but what varied emotions he could pour into his dignified and devotional Khayals (like *Mahadev Maheshwar*", or "*Prabhu ranga*

bheeni”, sensuous thumris like “*Yad piya Ki aye*”, or “*Tirchh najariya ke Baan*”), poignant Dadras (*Saiya bolbolo*) playful Horis, and soulful Bhajans. By his richly expressive style, he has silenced the detractors of classical music who argue that it is “dry and flat,” and therefore, sans appeal. This pained Ghulam Ali, who used to say—“This is because generally our musicians are more interested in technical virtuosity. But really, emotion is the very soul of our music which has the power to express the subtlest nuances of feeling”. He proved his point by his own style. “From the heart of the singer to the heart of the listener” was true in the case of his music. For the rare perfection and popularity that he brought to the Punjab *ang* Thumri, he has been rightly called “*the King of light classical music*”. He had cultivated a full and splendidly modulated voice that charmed listeners. It was a soothing, polished voice that could float effortlessly over the 3 octaves, in slow long glides (*meends*) or in *taans* of inimitable speed.

It is true that Ghulam Ali belonged to a long and illustrious musical lineage—the Patiala Gharana. But it was his genius that chiselled off all the harsh crudities and angularities of the once dry Patiala Gharana, and lent it such a rare polish and glow that today it has achieved countrywide popularity. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan has left behind not only hundreds of singers trying to emulate him, but also thousands and thousands of music-lovers who cherish his music. No other North Indian vocalist ever attracted such large audiences in the South as did Bade Ghulam Ali Khan.

Bade Ghulam Ali never tried to win the approbation of those classical purists who judge the excellence of a performance by the length of delineation of each *raga*. His aim was to appeal to the hearts of the millions who heard him. He would say: “What is the use of stretching each *raga* for hours? There are bound to be repetitions.” He was one of those rare musicians who was an adept in matching his music to the mood and tastes of his audiences. Indeed, few classical musicians have equalled his shrewd knowledge of audience-psychology. He used to give brief renderings of *ragas* at big conferences because he rightly felt that too elaborate *alaps* and *badhat* might sound tedious to the uninitiated

who form the bulk of big gatherings. However, he inevitably poured out his sweetest art at exclusive private *soirees*. It was at the great Vikram Samvat Conference in Bombay that Ghulam Ali shot up to dizzy heights of fame. It was an unforgettable occasion. All the shining jewels of Hindustani classical music like Aftab-E-Mausiqui Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Ustad Alladiya Khan, Kesarbai and all the rest of the brilliant galaxy were present.

Young Ghulam Ali's performance made him the sensation of the day. Those who heard him on that occasion still rave about the Khayals in *Pooriva*, and *Marwa* and the Thumris that he rendered then.

At his abode, wherever he used to stay, whether Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta or Hyderabad, he was surrounded by his admirers all the time, and the *Swarmandal* was always with him. Every few minutes, he would break into song to illustrate a point he was making. A firm believer in the debt that classical music owes to folk music, he could, with amazing dexterity, demonstrate the simple folk tunes like a real villager, and then suddenly sing out its fully polished classical counterpart in a scintillating manner! No wonder his admirers were always crowding around him throughout his waking hours. An ample-corpulent figure with a handlebar moustache, his face would become lighted up with expression as he sang, and music enriched with unsurpassed melodiousness would flow out of this great maestro.

During the Ustad's last stay in Bombay (prior to his departure for Hyderabad and his last fatal attack), my brother, a devout *BGA* fan in the course of his Cochin-Bombay-Calcutta flight, had a few hours' halt in Bombay, before taking a plane to Calcutta. It was 11 p.m. when he reached Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's place. Yet, with joy, the Ustad showed his hospitality, not by serving tea and sweets but by something more precious. "Bring my swarmandal!" he said to his son Munawwar. "Let me sing awhile for my dear guest." My brother was overwhelmed by the great artiste's humility, affection, and his utter absorption in music. One of my brother's most cherished possessions today is an old autographed *Swarmandal* of the Ustad.



SIDDESWARI DEVI (1903-1977)
WITH HER DAUGHTER SABITA DEVI



USTAD AMIR KHAN
(1912-1974)



BEGUM AKHTAR
(1914-1974)

BEGUM AKHTAR WITH HER DEDICATED DISCIPLE SHANTI HIRANAND



Bade Ghulam Ali was not only everyone's favourite, but the favourite of many musicians. When the news of his death spread (April 1968), great contemporaries like Begum Akhtar, Siddheswari Devi, Bhimsen Joshi, Dilip Chandra Vedi and a host of others spoke out in their grief over the "irreparable loss". Siddheswari Devi looked nostalgically at a group-photo in which she sat next to the great maestro after a grand music conference in 1936, and said in a tearful voice: "The like of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan will never come. There will not be another like him."

Begum Akhtar who had known him since long, paid her tribute thus: "I have never seen such a rare combination of greatness and simplicity. When I first heard him, I felt that I was hearing real music for the first time. He was my honoured guest for several months in Calcutta. He used to sing all day long. In fact, music was his sole interest in life. In sorrow he would draw solace from music: in joy also he would burst into song. What a rare musician!"

Under his pen name, *Sabrang*, he has left numerous lilting compositions—khayals and thumris. *Sabrang* had only one passion in life—*Music*. Today the great singer has merged into *Nadabrahma*, eternal bliss through music. His favourite Bhajan ever was and will be: *Hari Om Tatsat*.

Who knows future generations may refer to him with awe and reverence as we do of Tansen. Luckily, AIR has treasured the recordings of many of his memorable recitals for us and for posterity.

Chapter 24

Siddheswari Devi

With the passing away of Siddheswari Devi on March 18, 1977, the last of the four great pillars of Hindustani light classical music is gone. First went Begum Akhtar in 1974 at the age of 60, and then her older contemporaries, Rasoolan Bai, Badi Moti Bai and Siddheswari Devi. All four of them were inheritors of great traditions of music from a glorious era of the past when music dominated the lives of musicians from childhood to death. They were musical 'stars' who shone brilliantly in the courtly era; but when the 'darbari' era ended, they did not hesitate to step out into the glare of public acclaim.

Thumris were once sung with *abhinaya*. When classicists began to frown down on this type of music with *abhinaya*, the singers took to the *Bol-Banav-ki Thumri* in which the emotional contents of songs are effectively brought out through vocal expressiveness only, that is, beauty of notes, voice modulations, swara-combinations, and a specially emotion-charged style of singing. Bhaiya Ganpatrao, Moizuddin, and Shyamlal Khatri were some of the trail-blazers who gave this modern orientation to Thumri. Among those who have kept up these traditions till now in full glory, the outstanding names of this century have been Siddheswari Devi, Rasoolan Bai, Badi Moti Bai, Begum Akhtar, Mahadev Prasad Misra, and Girija Devi. Girija Devi is far younger than the others, and is of a different generation.

Born into a famous musical family in Varanasi in 1903, Siddheswari traced her musical lineage to her maternal

grandmother Maina Devi, a reputed singer of Kashi of nearly a century ago. She was the inheritor of great musical traditions from a family which produced several famous singers like Maina Devi, Vidyadhari Devi, Rajeswari Devi and Kamaleswari Devi. As Siddheswari lost her mother when she was barely 18 months old, she was brought up by her maternal aunt, Rajeswari, who was a famed disciple of Maina Devi, Mithailal, and of the great Moizuddin himself. Brought up in this musical atmosphere, Siddheswari absorbed a great deal of the art right from her infancy. Her childhood was an unhappy one as she lost her father also very soon. About this period of her life, she once said : "We did not have luxuries like the gramophone. But our neighbours had one; I used to go to them to listen to the records of popular singers like Janaki Bai, Gauharbai and several others. How their music used to captivate me!".

Noticing the talent and eagerness of the young girl, Siyaji Maharaj began to teach her. Siyaji's father Shyamacharan Misra, and uncle Ramcharan Misra had been good musicians. About her guru, Siddheswari used to say : "No one could possibly get a more generous and affectionate guru. Having no children of his own, he treated me like his own daughter. He taught me all the basic ragas, and a large number of Khayals, Tappas, and Taranas. He taught me with all his heart, and I practised my music with intense concentration and devotion. Nowadays, alas! the students are all in a hurry to acquire a diploma or a degree; they have no *lagan*.".

After the death of Siyaji Maharaj, she learnt for a while from Ustads Rajab Ali Khan of Dewas, and Inayat Khan of Lahore. However, her greatest guru, the one to whom she attributes most of her musical training was none other than Bade Ramdasji of Varanasi. Her face glowed with pride and veneration whenever she spoke about this generous guru who taught the eager disciple magnanimously. Nostalgically recalling those times of close *guru-shishya* bonds, Siddheswari once remarked to me : "The age of such great and generous gurus seems to have gone. No longer does one come across the really devoted type of pupils either. Today they are all in such a hurry----".

Later on in life, when she joined the Bharatiya Kala Kendra in Delhi as a professor, she earned the reputation for being a sincere and conscientious teacher. When I mentioned this to her, she simply remarked : "Why not, Beti ? Let something of my treasures remain with others after I am gone".

Siddheswari made her unforgettable debut at a Calcutta conference many many decades ago. Young Siddheswari's name was billed along with those of many of the veterans of the time, such as Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, Pt. Dilip Chandra Vedi, Ustad Faiyaz Khan and others. Her khayals in Malhar, and Suha-Sughrai, and her thumris, elicited high praise and medals galore from Pt. Omkarnathji and Ustad Faiyaz Khan. Another glorious performance of her's was in the All India Music Conference in Bombay in which Ustads Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Faiyaz Khan also were to sing. Siddheswari concluded her superb recital with such an intensely emotional rendering of the Bhairavi-Thumri (*Kaahe Ko daari re gulal Brajlal Kanhayi*) that the Aftab-e-Mausiqui refused to sing after her! He said to her : "After such music there is no room for any more. After Gauhar Malika, the crown of the Thumri rests on your head". Such was the grand magnanimity of the musical giants of the past!

After her first concert appearance at the age of 18, she began to receive invitations for performances in Rampur, Jodhpur, Lahore, Mysore and various other states which used to patronise classical music during that time. In the next 4 or 5 decades, she sang in many royal durbars, music conferences, national programmes, radio concerts and so on, until she became "an institution by herself in view of her enormous repertory and heritage of a rich musical tradition." In recognition of her valuable contributions to the enrichment and perpetuation of the Banaras (Poorab) *ang* of light classical music, Siddheswari was honoured with the Presidential Award in 1966, the Padmasri in 1967, the D. Litt from Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, and the title of "Desikottama" from the Viswa Bharati University. When we felicitated her on the Award, her humble and philosophical reply was : "It is all very well; but I shall continue to deserve these, only as

long as I can go on singing well enough to please you all". In spite of all the fame that she earned, she remained simple, unassuming and homely till the end. Among contemporary musicians, Kesarbai Kerkar and M.S. Subbalakshmi were the artistes she admired most.

Few musicians in recent times had such a vast repertoire as Siddheswari had.

Her rich storehouse included a large number of Khayals, Thumris, Dadras, Tappas, Kajaris, Chaitis and Bhajans. "A feeling heart, a fecund mind, and an expressive voice" are the prime requisites for a good light classical singer. Even when her voice had become "temperamental and thick" in old age, she could make up for it by a rare emotional fervour, and she could hold her audiences by her mood of intense absorption and her ability to bring out the emotional contents of the romantic or devotional themes. Siddheswari's music brought out all the salient features of the Banaras style, such as simple charm, intensity of feeling, and effective expression of emotions through sheer purity of notes, "meends" and voice-modulations. She said to me once: "Although my thumri is fully of the Banaras *ang*, I incorporate elements of the Khayal into it. You may say that my thumri-singing is *Khayal anga-pradhan*". She added spice and charm by sprinkling short, swift *tappa*-like *taans* and trills. In her early days, she was deeply impressed by the singing of Gauharjan, Zohrabai, and Malikajan. As a member of cultural delegations, Siddheswari gave recitals in Rome, Kabul, and Kathmandu.

Siddheswari cherished not only the songs galore that she had learnt from her revered guru Bade Ramdasji, but also the lofty principles that he impressed on his disciples. He used to advise her: "Music is the medium for pleasing and attaining God. You should never feel proud of any success. Always remain humble. The day your tears flow during your sangeet-sadhana, your music will have attained mellowness and maturity".

No wonder she always believed that both "*Siddhi*" and "*Ishwar*" can be attained through devoted sangeet-sadhana. Her deeply religious temperament had a great impact on her singing. In the last years of her life, the *Pukaars* in her Thumris

and Bhajans were like cries from an anguished devotee's heart. With eyes closed, mind absorbed, and left hand cupping her left ear (to receive the full drone of the *Tanpura*), she used to pour her heart out through her music. Siddheswari remained a most warm-hearted, simple, and loveable person, "an extraordinary amalgam" of innocence, courage, humour, generosity; youthful zest for life, and a rare dignity. Her life was, by no means, a happy or smooth one. She had an unhappy childhood and "an emotionally tumultuous" youth, and she had to undergo many bitter experiences in life. But all of these seem to have added to her natural dignity, strength and wisdom. One of her admirers described her as "a vast reservoir of warmth, an unfailing fountainhead of inspiration, a manifestation of humanity at its most compelling and earthy.... and yet a being full of sparks and sudden vertical ascents to the mystic regions where inspiration has its divine origins". She did not have the facilities to devote herself to sadhana, living like a recluse. She practised her music all the time, while she was cooking, washing clothes, or doing any of the ordinary household chores. Music was her very life.

The death of Siddheswari Devi has left a big void in the world of light classical music. Shanta Devi, her elder daughter whom she had trained up to follow her footsteps has remained in obscurity owing to poor health. Surprisingly, it is her younger daughter Savita Devi who has zoomed into the limelight as a delightful and popular singer, and it is Savita who shows every sign of taking her illustrious mother's place. Versatile and attractive Savita is not only a graduate (an M.A, and Sangeet-talankar) and a good Sitariya, but she has also shaped into a confident and popular vocalist with a wide repertoire of Khayals, and light classical varieties. Gifted with an appealing, melodious voice covering 3 octaves or more, she has undergone years of training in khayals under Pt. Moni Prasad of the Kirana gharana. She has a natural flair for the light classical varieties in which she was extensively trained by her mother whom she used to accompany as a supporting singer in many concerts. While working as Head of the Department of Music in Daulatram College (University of Delhi), she is continuing her own music *riyaz* tirelessly.

Many years before her death, Siddheswari had once told me : "My greatest ambition is to die while singing a perfect taan. I feel closest to God when I am lost in my music." Begum Akhtar also had expressed an almost identical wish which was fulfilled because she died in the peak of her glory, giving a memorable performance before the dropping of the final curtain.

But Siddheswari who lived till her seventies, had no such luck. She had been helplessly bed-ridden for many months prior to the sad end. In a TV interview prior to her last illness, she had confessed with dignity:— "There was a time when I used to sing for the public. Now I sing to please my God. My soul craves to go back to its original abode".

Malini Menon, one of Siddheswari's pet-pupils who had become more like a daughter to her, writes:— "*Maa* remained a student all her life. . .She had a child-like thirst for knowledge and she was ever so generous, as she could not bear to see anybody in want... *Maa* was turbulent as the waves, and yet calm like the distant sea. She was at peace with herself and had prepared for the journey of the soul to eternity. When the moment came, she accepted it with grace."

Siddheswari Devi's last brilliant recital was in the Radio Sangeet Sammelan (a couple of years before her end) in which she sang with a bubbling, youthful zest, accompanied on the Sarangi by Pt. Gopal Misra (who is no more), and on the Tabla by Ramji Misra. Eyes twinkling, the solitary diamond in her big nosering flashing points of light, a warm smile on her paan-reddened lips, Maa's homely figure emerges in one's memory. But as soon as she sat on the stage for a recital, one realised that she belonged to an entirely different world, and that her life had known "no horizons other than music". As I recall that last inspiring recital of hers in the Radio Sangeet Sammelan, memories of several other great past concerts of this music-devotee come to my mind, and her plaintive Jogiya echoes in my memory:—

"O Jogi ! Constantly uttering the name of Rama, you have become one with Him, leaving your little hut so empty---".

Ustad Amir Khan

Fourteenth February 1974 was an ill-fated day for Hindustani music because it lost two great stalwarts on the same day. Pt. Srikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar succumbed to protracted illness. Ustad Amir Khan in the height of his form and fame, was tragically killed in a car accident. Although in his early sixties the Ustad was still a force to reckon with in North Indian music, and had it not been for that grievous accident, he might have easily gone on dominating the music world for another decade or so. The world of Indian music went into mourning on 13th February 1974, and there were public condolence-meetings in numerous cities. Programmes of tributes to the two departed maestros were broadcast from all the important Stations of All India Radio.

Born in April 1912 in Kalanaur, Amir Khan began his musical training as a Sarangi-disciple of his own father Ustad Shahmir Khan, a noted Sarangi player who had learnt his art from Chajju Khan and Nazir Khan of the Bhindibazar gharana. Amir Khan's early grooming in Sarangi was only the foundation of his musical edifice. He had a vision and imagination of his own for higher artistic flights. Being a reputed artiste and a warm friendly person, Shahmir Khan's hospitable home was a veritable rendezvous of many great contemporary maestros like Ustads Allabande Khan, Jafruddin, Nasiruddin Khan, Beenkar Wahid Khan, Rajab Ali Khan, Hafeez Khan, Sarangi-nawaz Bundu Khan, Beenkar Murad Khan and several others. Thus, although Amir Khans's early musical training commenced with Sarangi, the impressionable and intelligent youngster was constantly exposed to the various vocal gharanas of the times. Gradually, Shahmir Khan himself began to devote more time to Amir Khan's vocal training in which *merukhand* (or Khandmeru) practice and sargam-singing were specially emphasised. Moulded by the styles of three great giants of his younger days, namely, Ustads Bahre Wahid Khan,

Rajab Ali Khan and Aman Ali Khan, Amir Khan evolved his own stylistic school which came to be known as "the Indore Gharana."

In fact, Amir Khan was a self-taught musician. He assimilated the distinctive features of the gayakis that appealed to his aesthetic sense and were in perfect accord with his voice. The style that he evolved was a unique fusion of intellect and emotion, of technique and temperament, of talent and imagination. His style was a synthesis of three different styles. He assimilated the colour and spirit of Wahid Khan's style, (with its chastity of swara intonation and a richly soporific effect of melodic elaboration) so well that Ustad Wahid Khan blessed him. "Long shall my music live in you after I am gone". The slow Khayal is rendered in such a slow tempo that it has "the langour of unfinished sleep." This style originated in the Merukhand style of the Bhindibazar-gharana. This generally strove to produce the permutations and combinations of a given set of notes. These are like mathematical exercises with little artistic effect in a concert. The development of the Vilambit Khayal was marked by deep serenity. The concept of an extra slow tempo with a slow and meticulous unfolding of the raga and the "cheez" was taken from Ustad Bahere Wahid Khan. His taans were clearly influenced by the eloquent ones of Ustad Rajab Ali Khan. In sargam-singing, he revealed his admiration for Ustad Aman Ali Khan.

During his early sojourn in Bombay, Amir Khan had become a close friend of Late Aman Ali Khan. Amir Khan always maintained that had Aman Ali Khan lived longer he would have been the former's "confrere in the world of music". This newly amalgamated "Indore" style of Ustad Amir Khan captivated and influenced a whole generation of younger musicians of all categories through the contemplative and reposeful beauty of his slow, leisurely Badhat (elaboration) enlivened by the "exuberance of his proliferating sargams" and rushing taans. So tremendous has been the impact of his distinctive "gayaki" on the rising generation of young Hindustani vocalists that Amir Khan commanded a large following among the younger aspirants. He no longer remained as an isolated individual. For years, he remained one of the most

sought after classical vocalists of his times. What set him apart from his contemporary artistes was the fact that he never made any concessions to popular tastes, but always stuck to his pure, almost puritanical, highbrow style. "His music combined the massive dignity of Dhruvpad with the ornate vividness of Khayal". There are some musicians of the Kirana school who argue that the words of the Khayals are of no importance! But Amir Khan held different views. He used to say:—"The poetic element in Khayal is as vital as its melodic element. An artiste has to have a poet's imagination to be a good musician". Amir Khan has proved that "chaste, refined music does not lack listener-response", for, he strictly remained uncontaminated by the present craze for showiness. The tall, handsome Ustad had a dignified concert presence. His dignity of bearing and his posture of Yogic calm on the stage "struck a perfect accord with the serene grandeur of his music. It was as though his musical thought was in tune with some ideal of beauty and he was striving to communicate it to his charmed audience". As Prof Sushil Kumar Saxena wrote (in the Sangeet Natak Akademi Journal 31) "An Amir Khan *swara* was at once a tuning of the self, a calm that spreads, while Ghulam Ali's glows with a pulpy luminosity".

Amir Khan's forte was the exaggeratedly slow or *ati vilambit* Khayal which he developed in a most leisurely mood with deep serenity and contemplativeness. While his ardent admirers found this part of his concert absolutely engrossing, there were others who found it "excruciatingly slow" or even "insipid"! He always avoided Sarangi accompaniment, and wanted nothing more than a steady, plain *Theka* from his Tabla accompanist. His favourite slow *talas* were Jhoomra and Tilwada. Words were subservient to the "absolute music" "that he sang, and naturally, "bol-alaps" and "Bol taans" were conspicuously absent in his singing. In the course of his prolonged unfoldment of the vilambit Khayal asthayi, Amir Khan would sometimes render flashing "meteoric taans". His "taans" were marked by many graces like elegant *gamaks*, *lahak* and clear "*daanas*" (clarity of each note). It was natural that the Ustad always chose highly serious, expansive, traditional ragas like Todi, Bhairav, Lalit, Marwa, Puriya, Malkauns,

Kedara, Darbari, Multani, Poorvi, Abhogi, Chandrakauns and so on. Even the lighter ragas like Hamsadhwani acquired a serious expansive mood when rendered by Amir Khan. His rich, mellow voice was at its best in the deep, dignified "mandra" notes (lower notes). His voice had some inherent limitations, but he shrewdly evolved a style to suit his voice.

Summing up the essence of his father's vocal style, Ekram Ahmad Khan (the eldest son of the Ustad) wrote :

"Amongst the elder maestros of music, Khan Saheb was intensely devoted to Rajab Ali Khan of Dewas, and Aman Ali Khan of Bhindibazar. He also studied the styles of Bahere Wahid Khan and Abdul Karim Khan and amalgamated the essence of the styles of these four maestros with his own intellectual approach to music, and conceived what is now known as the Indore gharana of music".

During the first 25 years of his life, Amir Khan devoted considerable time to sargam-singing, what is known as "Merukhand practice" consisting of varied permutations and combinations of kaleidoscopic swara-patterns. These complicated "Khandameru" sargams, and flashing meteoric *taans* brightened his reposeful vilambit Khayals now and then. The "Merukhand" style of singing is mentioned in the 14th century Sanskrit classic *Sangeeta-ratnakara* of Sarangdeva.

Another significant aspect of Amir Khan's art imparting it a unique quality, was his refined voice and the way he moulded it to suit his chosen style. Endowed with the face of an intellectual, his temperament, like his music, was serene, unruffled. He never lost his temper. He extended the same courtesy to all, big and small, and listened attentively to even lesser artistes. Humility was native to him, his judgements were generous, and he was above petty jealousies.

Although Amir Khan never rendered Thumris in his concerts, his disciples speak of the exquisite way in which he rendered Thumris for them in his intimate home-circle. His "cultured" voice was suited for the melodious Thumri style also. Amir Khan's sole concession to the speed-loving contemporary listeners was the Tarana in which he did considerable research. According to him, the Tarana-syllables have a mystical significance. Although his voice was at its best in

the lower notes, it could also soar and sweep across far-off swaras with nimble grace. Such was the influence of his music that in an era of impatient listeners, Ustad Amir Khan was able to instil, by the example of his own art, a genuine and widespread love for serious, contemplative music into the hearts of young music lovers all over the country. He was strongly against the idea of any short-cuts to success in music.

Even when Amir Khan did playback singing for some films, he refused to cut adrift from his classical moorings. The songs he rendered were always in highly classical style and in ragas like Darbari, Adana, Megh, Desi, Puriya Dhanasri etc. In his tribute the Ustad, Prof S.K. Saxena writes in the Sangeet Natak Akademi Journal :

"Amir Khan was different and solitary because of his absolute indifference to the reactions of his audience while he was singing. He never seemed to make a conscious endeavour to please the audience. He faced them majestically, with his music alone, and with pure classicality--- Often his music seemed strangely disembodied from raga-tala distinctions into a kind of musical incense borne aloft on the very wings of devotion-- His music, at its best, was rarely a dazzle. It would be rather an influence, an atmosphere which would just be with us till long after the recital".

There was a time when Amir Khan was a rage in Calcutta, and no music conference there was complete without his recital. The Films Division of the Government of India has brought out a documentary film on his life in recognition of his great contribution to Hindustani music. For his eminence as a performing artiste and for his significant contributions to classical music, he was crowned with many honours such as the Fellowship of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Presidential Award, Padma Bhushan (1971) and the Swar Vilas from Sur Singar Samsad (1971). But these honours and his large following in the music world left him untouched. Amir Khan continued to be a very simple individual "accessible to all and sundry", and he never assumed any airs like some of his contemporaries. Though not educated in the formal sense, he was a highly sophisticated person whomoved with dignity in the highest society where he was genuinely revered. It was considered

a privilege to be his friend. Through his own efforts, he learnt Hindi, Urdu, Persian and a bit of Sanskrit, and he studied the writings of Guru Nanak, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and others. Khan Saheb's son Ekram Ahmad Khan writes that it was these studies and his close friendship with Narayan Swami (of Calcutta) that led to his unique blend of Sufism. "Khan Saheb", writes his son, "was a Sufi in the true sense of the word--- a man without any specific religious ties, a man totally devoted to the oneness of mankind, a true citizen of the World". Amir Khan was a good composer and some of his compositions reflect these religious convictions of his. One instance is "*Laaj rakh lijyo mori, Saheb, Sattar, Nirankar, Jai ke Daata, Tu Raheem Ram Teri maaya aparampar, Mohe tore karam pe aadhar Jag ke daata---*".

Whenever I heard Amir Khan singing the Khayal in Bairagi beginning with the words-- "*Man sumirat nis din tumhari naam*", I felt that the words and the spirit of the raga were most aptly suited for Amir Khan's musical temperament.

Since 1968, Khan Saheb used to go to U.S.A in alternate years to spend the summer with his son Ekram Ahmad Khan, a graduate in chemical engineering from McGill University, who has settled down in U.S.A as an Engineering Manager in Canada. Amir Khan also used to go as a visiting professor of music at the State University of New York at New Paltz where "he planted not only the seeds of his music among the students, but also left behind the legacy of his Sufi philosophy".

Unassuming in his ways, Amir Khan had the capacity to adjust himself perfectly to his environments. He seemed equally at home among the humble as well as among the highly sophisticated. What a pity that this great artiste was snatched away in the peak of his career! Here was a rare classicist who sustained his art by pure devotion, and yet enjoyed wide popularity.

Even now, more than 7 years after his untimely death, Amir Khan's music is still a living force because his voice is being frequently heard over AIR through his recordings in the Archives and his Long Playing Records. The Indore gharana of Amir Khan continues to live on through his pupils like Amarnath, Kanan, Srikant Bakre, Singh Brothers, Kankana Banerji, Poorabi Mukherji and others. There are many others whose singing has been obviously coloured by the style of Amir Khan. The singer is gone, but his music is still with us.

Begum Akhtar

The sudden death of Begum Akhtar marks the end of an era in the world of Hindustani classical music. She was our most vital and perhaps last link with Lucknow's colourful musical past. Somehow, her singing always created visions of that glorious and opulent era when high-class music, Urdu poetry, refined tastes, tasteful living, polished manners and beautifully polite language in day-to-day life—all these and much more had made "Lucknow-culture" so famous and admirable. Although Begum Akhtar, like other artistes of this modern age, 'jetted' her way through her constant chain of engagements inside and outside the country, her personality and her music retained all the old world charm, *itminan, murawwat*, serenity, and the exotic richness of Lucknow's bygone leisurely *Nawabi* era. The performances of most of her contemporaries deteriorated with the encroachment of the infirmities of old age. But Begum Saheba's music was like seasoned wine—each passing year adding to its rich flavour and mellowness. If the music of her younger days maddened her listeners with a certain intoxicating quality (*Deewana banaana hai to deewana bana de*) her singing even in her late fifties, lost none of its captivating effervescence; it only gained in rich mellowness and depth of appeal. In the very last recording (a Ghazal of Kaifi Azmi) that she did for All India Radio just a few days before her death, her singing is charged with a feeling of sadness and an emotional intensity that it had never before achieved—as if the artiste had some foreboding of the approaching end.

Begum Sahiba had had a mild heart-attack some weeks ago and had been advised complete rest. But who can keep "a nightingale" encaged for long? In spite of all the appeals, and admonitions from her family, friends, fans and physician, she accepted a long chain of engagements with her cheerful and unchallengeable argument: "I am not afraid of death. My ambition is to die while singing beautifully." God fulfilled her ambition, and she died the way she wanted to! On October 22, 1974, all the Stations of All India Radio were relaying and listening to Begum Akhtar's last Radio Sangeet Sammelan Concert. Music gushed forth from her throat with youthful exuberance, inspiring her disciple Shanti Hiranand to give remarkable vocal support. Who could have dreamt that this was going to be the swan-song of "the dying swan"!

Long before the advent of TV, Radio, and Tape Recorders, Akhtari's gramophone records had earned her country wide popularity. There are hundreds of these, and many of them continue to be super hits even after the passage of so many decades. At an age when most singers sit back and rest on their past laurels, Begum Akhtar continued to be so heavily booked that she had to keep flying from city to city all the time, fulfilling her numerous commitments. Even in her sixties, she continued to captivate and enthral vast audiences, and win the acclaim of the most exacting critics. Few musicians have enjoyed such a long and successful career with an ever mounting popularity.

Many many years ago, soon after the devastating Bihar earthquake, a well-known theatrical company of Calcutta had organized a big music conference to collect funds for the quake stricken victims. Many famous Ustads had promised to perform, but no one had turned up. The milling crowds of listeners, so typical of Calcutta, were clamouring for the show to commence. The organisers were at their wits' end. Ustad Ata Mohammad Khan of Patiala who was there with his young pupil Bibbi (Akhtari's childhood pet-name) came to their rescue by suggesting that they ask the little lady to give a song. Recalling that evening, Begum Akhtar once said: "I had never before faced an audience. My knees turned to water, and I began to tremble all over with sheer stage-fright.

When the curtain arose, and the people gave me, a newcomer, a "welcome" hand, my plight became worse, and I thought I would collapse on the stage. After a long pause, during which I prayed to God to give me courage, I started with a favourite ghazal of mine. Suddenly I felt my nerves relax and my voice soar in full-throated ease". She enthralled the large and critical audience by singing four Ghazals and five Dadras at a stretch, and her performance was received with thunderous ovation. After the performance, when Bibbi went backstage, a charming and dignified lady clad in a Khadi sari was waiting to meet her. The visitor told her:- "When I came to the conference, I had intended to stay only for a while. But your music captivated me and forced me to stay on till the end. Today I listened to you. Tomorrow you must come and hear me".

The morning-papers were full of praise for the music of *Bibbi* who had now emerged as the famous Ghazal singer Akhtari B.i. The gift of a Khadi sari and an invitation from "the lady in Khadi" arrived for her. It was a thrilling moment for Akhtari, for the lady was none other than "the Nightingale of India"—Sarojini Naidu !

That Akhtari was born into a family sans music may sound incredible. She and her twin sister were born on October 7 1910. (Some people take the year of birth as 1914) in Faizabad. Her twin-sister's death at the age of three was her first encounter with death. *Bibbi* was a stubborn and restless little girl, very sensitive to music, with a precocious talent for memorising songs. As a little girl she went "quite crazy" (according to her own admission) about the singing and acting of Chandabai, the actress in a roving theatrical company that had come to Faizabad for some time. *Bibbi* had her first music-lessons from Ustad I mdad Khan of Patna (who was the Sarangiya of such famous singers as Malikajan of Agra and Gauharjan of Calcutta). But he was a highbrow teacher who instead of beginning with rudimentary music lessons, started with an advanced raga like Kamod. For a beginner this is not an easy raga. Unable to cope with this unfamiliar raga, her interest strayed away to the more familiar and simple village-songs which appealed to her. Imdad Khan's music

lessons were discontinued. For sometime after this, *Bibbi* and her mother lived in Gaya where she had music lessons under Ustad Ghulam Mohammad Khan.

Each year during Moharram, *Bibbi* and her mother used to return to Faizabad for a few days. On one such visit, Ustad Sakhawat Hussain Khan, a well-known Sarodiya who used to be a teacher in the Bhatkhande College of Music (Lucknow), heard her music and was impressed by her eagerness and talent. A friend of the family, he took the trouble to persuade Ustad Ata Mohammad Khan of Patiala (who belonged to the Gharana of Tanras Khan) to shift to Faizabad and take charge of the promising young pupil. Gifted with a powerful voice, Ata Mohammad Khan believed in the prime importance of voice-culture through long hours of practice in the lower octave (*kharaj bharna*). Bored to tears by what seemed to be "dull voice-exercises", *Bibbi* was on the verge of giving up her lessons, when one day, suddenly she heard her Ustad elaborating the plaintive raga Gunkali so beautifully that she changed her mind and decided to take her lessons earnestly. Talking about this incident, Begum Sahiba ruefully said : "What a silly girl I was! I did not pay heed to his valuable advice at first and used to feel bored with the voice-exercises. Today my heart overflows with gratitude to my Ustad, who so patiently moulded my voice and made it so pliant".

Mother, daughter and the Ustad migrated to musical Calcutta where initially, they had to endure so much penury and hardship that young Akhtari took a bold decision (against the wishes of her mother and guru) to sing for the Megaphone Record Company. That first Ghazal-record of hers (*Woh asire dam-e*) was such a success that it was followed by scores and scores of Thumris, Dadras and Ghazals—all still as popular as ever. Luckily even these short, old records do justice to her richly-timbered and sonorous voice. For a time Akhtari fell under the spell of an acting career. "Ek Din Ki Badshahat", "Mumtaz Begum" "Naseeb Ka Chakkar" and "Roti" were some of the films in which she acted, while she did playback-singing for others such as "Ehsan", "Daana Paani", and Satyajit Ray's "Jalsaghar". Fascinated by stage music in general, and by the stage songs of Jhande Khan in particular, she neglected her *riyaz*.

so much that her Ustad Ata Mohammad Khan gave her a firm ultimatum : "Either you concentrate on your music, or go and become an actress!"

Fortunately, at this critical stage in her career, Akhtari got many chances to hear the celebrities of the time such as Jaddan Bai, Malkajan, Gauharjan and Moizuddin Khan. She was so deeply impressed that thereafter she dedicated her life to music, practising for 12 hours a day ! An invitation from the Hyderabad Court, and later on, from the Court of Rampur helped Akhtari to break away from the lure of the theatre and film-worlds of Calcutta and Bombay. It was about this time that Ustad Wahid Khan of Lahore agreed to accept her as his disciple after due *ganda bandh* ceremony. Perhaps this excellent musician was the guru who exerted the most prominent influence in moulding her style.

Although Akhtari basked in glamorous limelight for many years, the rootless life without any moorings had begun to pall. After her marriage to Ishtiaq Ahmad Abba si, 'a well-known Barrister of Lucknow', she gave up singing and settled down to revel in a simple life of domesticity like any other housewife. For morethan four years, it seemed that this great artiste was lost to the world of music for ever. Formal *soirees* of musicians were often arranged in their drawing-room with all its old-world charm of Lucknow-culture, but Begum Akhtar remained a listener. At one of these sittings, a good friend of the Abbasis, L.K. Malhotra, of All India Radio, Lucknow requested her to give a song. Her reply was: "I have given up singing. After so many years of singing, I thought I needed some rest, and for nearly 5 years, I have not even touched the Tanpura or Harmonium." But thanks to Mr. Malhotra's persistent coaxing, one day at last she agreed to come to the Lucknow Studios of the AIR and record some songs while no one but the instrumental accompanists were around, and the Station Director had to promise that the recording would not be broadcast. When the beautiful recording was played back to her, all her suppressed longing for music rushed back, and tears streamed out of her eyes. In Mr. Malhotra's words : "As the torrents in her soaring voice

came back, so also the tears from her eyes. She got up hurriedly saying, "*Hai Allah! Koi Dekhega to kya Kahega!*"

Explaining her come-back to the world of AIR and concerts, her husband said : "After her marriage, she had given up singing. But when her mother died, she became so hysterical with grief that she used to sit and weep endlessly at her mother's grave. I was most worried. Our good family-friend and physician advised me that unless I permit her to resume her singing and thus provide her with an emotional outlet, she might become mentally deranged with sorrow. So I had to agree. Slowly she resumed her Radio programmes and her concert-performances—". And what a glorious come-back Begum's has been—such as few musicians have ever had! Cultured Lucknow with its musical *mehfils* and *mushairas* provided a most congenial atmosphere for the couple. Begum Akhtar's fame spread, and she was honoured by the Sangeet Natak Akademi as well as with the "Padma Sri". In 1961 she thrilled the mixed audience of Karachi in a concert arranged by the Indian Embassy. One item that drew repeated applause was her famous Dadra : "*Hamari Atariya pe ao sajana sara jhagda khatam hoi jai!*"! In 1963 she went to Afghanistan, and in 1967 to U S S R as a member of a cultural delegation. Meanwhile her ordinary and LP records of Ghazals continued to sell like hot cakes.

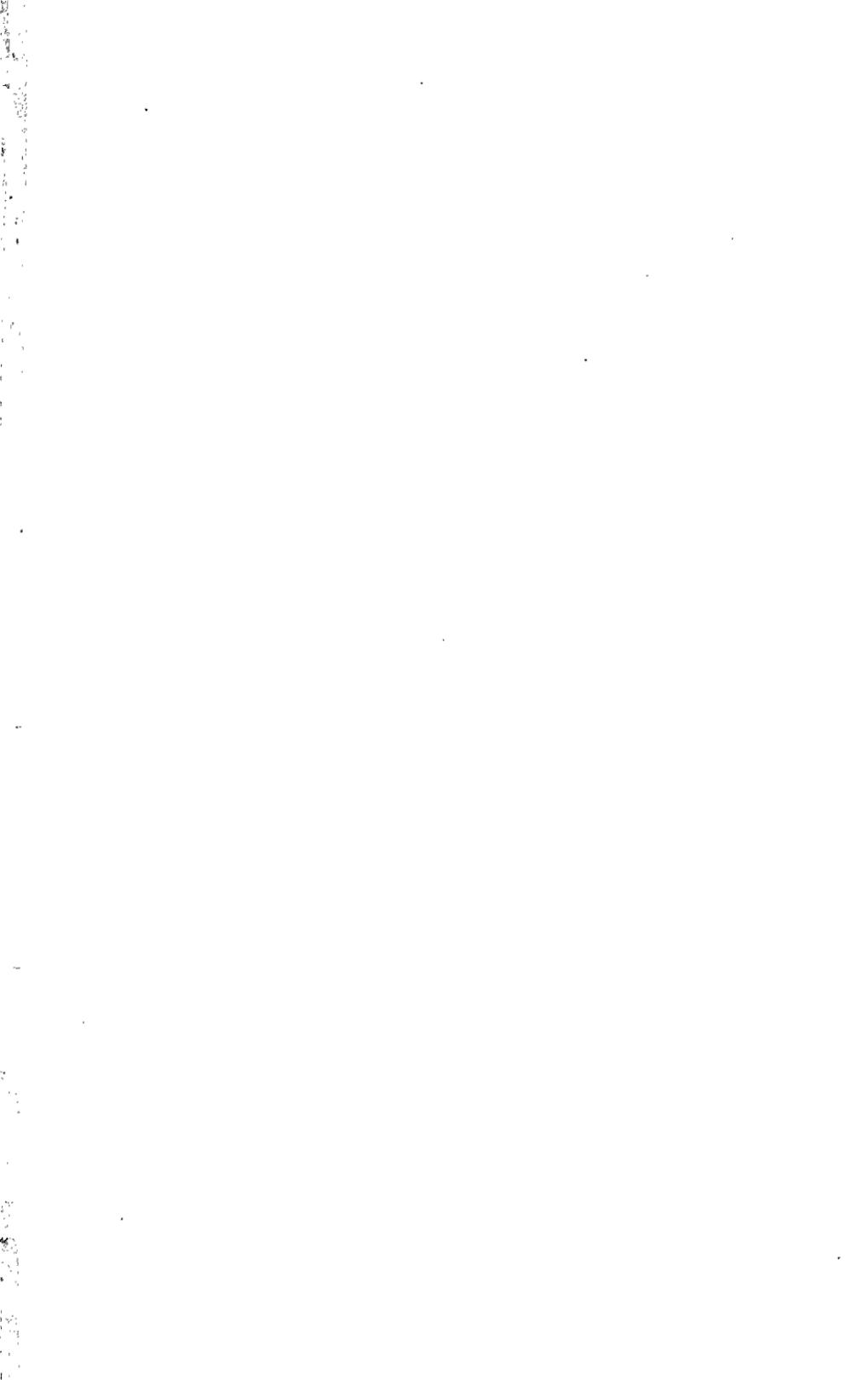
The sound training in Khayals and Ragas that Begum Akhtar had received, especially from Ustad Wahid Khan, was what made her singing so colourful. She used to sing the same Thumris, Dadras and Ghazals in different ragas at different times, according to the occasion and the mood of the moment. She could render them not only in the various common ragas, but also in rare ones like *Kalawati*, *Deshkar*, *Chandrakauns*, *Kalingda*, *Kaunshi-Kanada*, *Chavanat*, *Narayani* and so on. By a lovely blending of the Punjab and *Poorab ang* Thumris, she gave a stamp of her own to the *Lucknow-ang Thumri*, of which she has been the leading exponent. As for her interpretation of Ghazals (her repertoire of Ghazals was an endless reservoir), she reigned for decades as the peerless "Queen of Ghazals". Her husband Abbasi Sahib, a typical product of Lucknow culture, and a connoisseur of

music and Urdu poetry, helped the Begum to understand and appreciate the literary *nuances* of the great Ghazals of Ghalib, Jigar, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Kaifi Azmi, Shakeel Badauni, Hasrat Jaipuri and of so many others which she used to present in her own inimitable style. Her songs were heard again and again for some elusive, hitherto undiscovered nuances which added invariably a new dimension to the meaning of the words. She brought to her singing a bubbling effervescence akin to the most intoxicating, heady, champagne. Impeccable diction, phrases clothed in the most appropriate swara-combinations adorned with effective *Khatkas*, *Tana*, *Murkis* and the typical "*patti*" (the attractive break in her voice), suitable choice of ragas, and a rich aesthetic presentation were some of the characteristics that made her the undisputed Ghazal-Queen. In spite of basking in this ever-growing adulation of classes and masses alike, she remained unspoilt, charming, approachable, and compassionate. Though childless herself, she was the affectionate "Ammi" of numerous admirers and young musical aspirants. Unfortunately, she seems to have had no serious or dedicated pupil except for Shanti Hiranand who invariably accompanied her at her recitals. Although Begum was on the staff of the Bhatkhande Music College, Lucknow, and she opened some "classes" in her home, she never had the time or temperament for imparting training. The void left by her demise in the field of light classical music and ghazals will perhaps never be filled.

I have lost count of the number of times I have listened to, her captivating and different renderings of "*Jiya Mora Laharaye*" a *Sawan*", and her unique Dadra, "*Koyal Tyaa Mat kar pukaar, Kalejwa me laagi Katarif!*" From now on, this cry of anguish will arise from the hearts of her countless admirers. Each time we hear this record or recording of hers, our hearts will feel a deep stab of pain at the thought that "the koel" is no longer in our midst, and that her rich, resonant voice has been hushed into the silence of eternity. In one of the last private soirees she gave at a friend's house, she sang the prophetic Ghazal:— *Mohabbat karnewale kam na honge; teri mehfil me lekin ham na honge!*. The eternal, insatiable quest of an artistic soul was poignantly expressed in the last Ghazal that Begum Akhtar sang for All India Radio : *Main dhoondhta hun jise, woh yahan nahi milta!*.

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